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President: Mr. Kerim . . . . (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Outlule (Botswana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Rüdiger von Wechmar, President of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session

The Acting President: Before we take up the item on our agenda for this morning, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Rüdiger von Wechmar, President of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session and eighth emergency special session, who passed away on Wednesday, 17 October 2007.

A journalist, politician and diplomat, His Excellency Mr. von Wechmar had a distinguished career in international news agencies as well as in the information media and foreign service of his country. From 1974 to 1980 he was the permanent representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations.

As President of the General Assembly, Mr. von Wechmar played an outstanding role in the Organization, and made a major contribution towards the achievement of the objectives set out in the Charter.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I should like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Germany and to the bereaved family of Mr. von Wechmar.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Rüdiger von Wechmar, former President of the General Assembly.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I am speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, which was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Rüdiger von Wechmar, and, through me, expresses its profound condolences to the Assembly, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German people and his family.

Rüdiger von Wechmar was a soldier in the Afrika Korps. After the Second World War, he made his mark as a journalist, politician and eminent diplomat.

As a spokesman for the Government of Willy Brandt, Mr. von Wechmar left his mark on his time and era as a fervent worker for Ostpolitik and rapprochement between East and West, at the side of one of the most brilliant German statesmen of the twentieth century.

From 1974 to 1981, as ambassador and permanent representative of his country to the United Nations in New York, he took on great responsibilities, including the highest responsibility of the Organization, that of President of the General Assembly. Under his guidance, at its thirty-fifth session the Assembly adopted important resolutions that speak volumes about his tremendous contribution

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to the quest for solutions to the major challenges facing mankind. It was under his presidency that the Assembly adopted the declaration on the Second Disarmament Decade at a time when détente was becoming a reality and needed to be reinforced — witness the great disarmament treaties negotiated within the Assembly during the 1980s.

The thirty-fifth session was also a decisive turning point in the promotion of economic and social development, as indicated by the adoption of important resolutions on the protection of the environment, following the commitment of his country to this great cause. One of the most important resolutions of the session was resolution 35/8, "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations".

It was also during the thirty-fifth session that the first World Food Day, now commemorated annually on 16 October, was proclaimed, as well as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

Africa identifies with the work done by this eminent diplomat, which made possible notable progress in combating hunger in the world and in guaranteeing the right to access to water, which remains central to the concerns of the continent.

The decisions of the thirty-fifth session gave impetus to the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. It is in the wake of that initiative, certainly, that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification finds its place. The decisions prepared the ground for the international mobilization that led to the holding of the major international conferences in the 1990s.

It was at the thirty-fifth session that the concept of the special needs of Africa emerged at the United Nations, with the momentum created by the Lagos Plan of Action, which preceded the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to a certain extent. Some 20 resolutions concerning assistance to African countries were adopted at the thirty-fifth session.

Africa owes much to the leadership of Mr. von Wechmar. The African Group pays a well-deserved tribute to the memory of that great man and to his country, the Federal Republic of Germany, which he worthily represented for more than a decade in New York.

Rüdiger von Wechmar served with loyalty and distinction the spirit of multilateralism and the ideals of the Organization. The United Nations must cherish his memory as a great and highly skilled diplomat of our times.

Mr. Cho Hyun (Republic of Korea): As Chair of the Asian Group for the month of October, I would like to express our condolences to the Government and people of Germany on the passing of His Excellency Ambassador Rüdiger von Wechmar. May he rest in peace.

Ambassador von Wechmar was for many years a friend to the United Nations. As the permanent representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, he served as Vice-President of the General Assembly and of the First Committee, and as President of the Security Council. In 1980, he undertook the responsibilities of President of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

Beyond his work with this Organization, Ambassador von Wechmar led a life dedicated to service, not only as a diplomat, but also as a journalist courageously reporting from Eastern European countries during the cold war. Ambassador von Wechmar is remembered fondly by those who were lucky enough to work with him. His kindness, decency and commitment to bettering the world stand as examples that all of us in the United Nations family should strive to follow.

The member States of the Asian Group are grateful for the years of devoted service that Ambassador von Wechmar gave to the United Nations, and we extend our sympathies and kind wishes to the bereaved.

May God bless Ambassador von Wechmar, and may God bless all those who knew him and who mourn his loss.

Mr. Towpik (Poland): On this sad occasion, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

We mark today the passing of Baron Rüdiger von Wechmar — an excellent German journalist, politician, diplomat and the President of the General Assembly. His life is an example of the complicated biographies of the twenty century. During his rich and multidimensional career, Rüdiger von Wechmar demonstrated great determination in overcoming the difficult legacy of the past. He proved his deepest commitment to the values and principles upon which our Organization is based. His contribution to the work of the United Nations was outstanding.

As permanent representative of Germany to the United Nation and as President of the General Assembly, he gave many years of dedicated service to our Organization. He contributed significantly to international efforts to promote peace and stability, rapprochement of nations and justice in the world. We all will remember and cherish his great diplomatic passion, his personal character, his voice of reason and his devotion to the United Nations and to the world diplomatic community.

On behalf of the Eastern European group, I would like to convey to the Government and people of Germany, as well as to the family of Ambassador von Wechmar, our deepest sympathy and most sincere condolences.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I have the honour to pay a posthumous tribute to the former President of the General Assembly, Baron Rüdiger von Wechmar, who passed away recently.

Ambassador von Wechmar had a long and distinguished career at the service of his nation, Germany. It is particularly noteworthy that when he was only 17 years old he fought in the Second World War and was taken prisoner. After becoming a journalist he entered the diplomatic service of his country. That change in his life is an example of someone who, having been within the conflagration and having intimate knowledge of its devastating consequences, embraces new professions geared to spreading the truth in the ongoing quest for international peace.

As a result, he also held several important positions in the Federal Republic of Germany, including Under-Secretary of State and Government spokesman. More specifically in the diplomatic multilateral sphere, in 1974 he was appointed ambassador to the United Nations, and he represented Germany with distinction on the Security Council in 1977 and 1978. He was elected President of the General Assembly for its thirty-fifth session, from 1980 to 1981, and he also presided over the eighth emergency special session.

He was a key player in the multilateral sphere at a time when the United Nations was also part of the cold war, demonstrating his remarkable professional capacity and steadfast vocation to achieve the timeless goals of the Organization.

At this moment of grief my delegation extends its most heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Germany, and in particular to the members of his family for their profound loss.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): As Chairman of the Western European and Other States Group for October, I have the sad duty of extending our heartfelt condolences over the loss of a great diplomat who contributed in many capacities to the realization of the ideals and objectives enshrined in the Charter. Indeed, the passing away of Mr. Rüdiger von Wechmar, permanent representative of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1974 to 1981, and President of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, is a great loss not only for his family and country, but for the entire United Nations community.

He was elected President of the General Assembly in 1980, at a time when the United Nations was faced with formidable challenges. The bipolar character of the international system was at its climax, and the United Nations was searching for innovative ways to provide effective solutions to the problems of our globe.

As President of the General Assembly at that critical time, Mr. Rüdiger von Wechmar worked resolutely to bridge the differences and pave avenues of cooperation. His efforts were in many cases instrumental in the adoption of important resolutions dealing with a wide array of issues, ranging from development to disarmament. That is why, after almost 30 years, his contributions from the Chair are still vividly remembered and appreciated.

For instance, in his inaugural address upon election as the President of the General Assembly, he strongly stressed the importance of addressing the legitimate needs of the underdeveloped countries, and called for a new economic order in which the rich and the poor would join hands for a truly common and prosperous future. I believe his remarks make even more sense today.

I conclude by paying tribute to the distinctive heritage of Rüdiger von Wechmar and conveying once again our heartfelt sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues.

Mr. Young (United States of America): I speak on behalf of the host country, which extends its sincerest condolences on the passing of Rüdiger von Wechmar, a great diplomat and friend of the United Nations.

We appreciate Mr. von Wechmar's long-term commitment and service to the ideals of the United Nations, first as the permanent representative of the Federal Republic of Germany and then as the thirty-fifth President of the General Assembly, from 1980 to 1981. He is remembered as a charismatic, effective and talented diplomat.

We extend our sincerest sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues. The entire United Nations community mourns the loss of this good friend and skilled diplomat.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): On behalf of the Federal Government, and also in the name of the family of the late Rüdiger von Wechmar, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm words of sympathy expressed by previous speakers.

Rüdiger von Wechmar was the longest-serving permanent representative of Germany to date, heading the Permanent Mission from 1974 to 1981. He represented his country here in New York in a period that might be called the formative years of Germany at the United Nations. Having served previously as spokesman to Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, he became the first permanent representative to be appointed after the admission of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic to the United Nations in 1973.

After the election of the Federal Republic as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1977, he represented the Federal Republic in the Council from 1977 to 1978. He crowned his career at the United Nations by being elected President of the General Assembly in 1980.

As President of the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, he worked relentlessly for a number of very important issues on the agenda at that time. He partook in the General Assembly's achievements, but also — as he himself frankly admitted in his last statement as President — in the many drawbacks. In his typical straightforward way of speaking, he did not shy away from calling the Assembly he had presided over an Assembly of frustrations. One of the frustrations he identified was the working methods of the General Assembly. "Our General Assembly — indeed our United Nations," he said, "is being slowly suffocated by too many resolutions, too many meetings, too many subsidiary organs, far too much documentation." (*A/36/PV.1, para.32*)

But, being a man of unstoppable optimism, he believed that Member States could opt for change:

> "What the world is expecting from its leaders, especially from those at the helm of the most powerful Member States, is vision and compassion, determination and dedication. We have been talking so much and so often of the need for political will. The time to act and to show such political will is now; tomorrow may be too late." (*ibid., para. 42*)

Twenty-five years later those words have lost none of their significance.

Rüdiger von Wechmar was also a man of letters and a stylish writer, renowned for his ability in difficult diplomatic situations to break the ice with a good quotation and some proven words of wisdom. So, in conclusion, allow me to repeat a verse by an eighteenth-century theologist whom Rüdiger von Wechmar cherished and quoted in his concluding statement in 1981:

> "God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference between the two." (*ibid, para. 43*)

If we could take this piece of advice as guidance in our work at the United Nations today, that would probably be the most beautiful tribute to Rüdiger von Wechmar that he himself could have imagined.

Agenda item 87

Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/258)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.5)**

The Acting President: I invite Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International

Atomic Energy Agency, to introduce the report of the Agency for 2006.

Mr. ElBaradei (International Atomic Energy Agency): The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was created 50 years ago in an atmosphere charged with both concern and hope regarding the future of atomic science. The IAEA was entrusted with ensuring that nuclear energy would not become a cause for human destruction, but would be, rather, a vehicle for peace and prosperity.

If one were to recall our history since then, a number of milestones and trends would stand out: the rapid expansion of nuclear power in the 1960s and 1970s; the landmark Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970 and the development of the comprehensive IAEA verification regime; the evolution of the Agency's technical assistance programme as a key vehicle for the transfer of nuclear science and technology to developing countries; and the development of international nuclear safety and security regimes.

Throughout its history, the IAEA has also faced a number of challenges and painful experiences necessitating change, adjustment and innovation: the 1986 accident at Chernobyl, the discovery of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons programme in the early 1990s or the nuclear security challenge revealed in the aftermath of 11 September 2001.

Today, I would like to discuss some of the Agency's current challenges and developments. But I believe it is worth recalling the ideals and objectives that have guided the Agency since its formation. They remain as relevant and meaningful today as they were to the founders of the IAEA.

I have spoken in recent years of rising expectations for nuclear power. But forecasting is always difficult. In my view, the role of the IAEA is not so much to predict the future as to do its utmost to plan and prepare for it.

What seems clear today is that there are three strong factors driving a renewed global interest in nuclear power: the steady growth in energy demand; the increasing concerns about energy security; and the challenge of climate change.

There are currently 439 nuclear power reactors in operation in 30 countries. These reactors supply just over 15 per cent of the world's electricity. To date, the use of nuclear power has been concentrated in industrialized countries. But in terms of new construction the pattern is different: half of the 30 reactors now being built are in developing countries.

In parallel with the increase in interest in nuclear power, the IAEA has experienced a sharp rise in requests for assistance with national energy studies. We are currently supporting studies in 77 Member States. Of these studies, 29 are exploring nuclear energy as a potential option. Algeria, Belarus, Egypt, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Viet Nam and Yemen are among those considering introducing nuclear power programmes, or moving forward with the infrastructure needed. And many others, such as Argentina, Bulgaria, China, Finland, France, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Pakistan, South Africa, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, are working to add new reactors to their existing programmes.

Technological and institutional innovation is naturally a key factor in ensuring the long-term sustainability of nuclear power. By "institutional innovation", I mean creative policy and infrastructure approaches. In some cases, a shared regional approach to nuclear power infrastructure, construction and operation may be feasible. A good example is the ongoing cooperation among the Baltic States on energy strategies, which now includes collaboration with Poland on plans to construct a nuclear power plant to help meet regional electricity demands.

On the technology innovation front, I should note that the Agency's International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO) is now considering collaborative projects on specific technological issues that need to be addressed for improved economics, safety, proliferation-resistance and other characteristics.

Given the fundamental importance of energy for development, it is important that we actively pursue the design and production of small and intermediate sized reactors. Successful production of safe and affordable reactors in this size range will be essential if nuclear power is to be a feasible option for countries and regions with small electrical grids.

The expected expansion in nuclear power will drive a corresponding increase in the need for countries to ensure a reliable supply of nuclear fuel. This could also increase the potential proliferation risks created by the spread of sensitive nuclear technology, particularly if more countries decide to create independent uranium enrichment and plutonium separation facilities. These trends point clearly to the urgent need for the development of a new, multilateral framework for the nuclear fuel cycle, both the front and the back end.

With respect to the front end, some have proposed the creation of an actual or virtual reserve fuel bank of last resort, under IAEA auspices, for the assurance of supply of nuclear fuel. This bank would operate on the basis of apolitical and non-discriminatory non-proliferation criteria.

The Russian Federation proposes to convert a national facility into an international enrichment centre. Germany is proposing the construction of a new, multinational enrichment facility under IAEA control. The Agency has been examining these proposals and their associated legal, technical, financial and institutional aspects.

Controlling nuclear material is a complex process, yet if we fail to act, it could be the Achilles' heel of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In my view, an incremental approach is the way to move forward, beginning with the establishment of an equitable system for assurance of supply. The next step would seek to bring any new operations for uranium enrichment and plutonium separation under multinational control. Over time, these multinational controls would also be extended to existing facilities.

The Agency directs much of its scientific activity to peaceful nuclear applications related to health, agriculture, industry, water management and preservation of the environment. I will offer a few examples.

Since last September, we have increased the fundraising efforts of our Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT). Working with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international partners, we have also begun to develop demonstration sites to enhance multidisciplinary cancer control capacity in Albania, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Yemen. As these projects mature, they will serve as a platform for raising awareness and for larger-scale regional fundraising.

For more than 40 years, the Agency has benefited from an active partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), through the Joint Division established in 1967. With persistent hunger affecting more than 820 million people in the world, efforts to enhance food security and safety and increase crop productivity have never been more relevant.

With thousands of new varieties of food crops released in dozens of countries over the past half century, plant breeding has been one of the real success stories of Atoms for Peace. For example, a recent regional project in Asia used plant breeding to develop more than 20 new food crop varieties. As one result, farmers in areas of Sri Lanka affected by the December 2004 tsunami are now growing a variety of green bean that is tolerant of saline soil, as well as being nutritious and giving higher yield.

The safety and security of nuclear activities around the globe remain key elements of the Agency's mandate. With the renewed interest in nuclear power generation, comparable attention and commitment must be given to ensuring the nuclear safety and security infrastructure that must go with it.

The primary responsibility for safety rests with the operator of a nuclear facility or the user of a nuclear technique, as well as with the national Government overseeing that operation or use. Technology can be transferred, but safety culture cannot; it must be learned and embedded. For those countries embarking on nuclear power programmes, it is essential that they become part of the global nuclear safety regime and share responsibility for its sustainability.

The strong, steady safety performance of recent years is reassuring. But complacency, an overemphasis on cost savings, the impulse to cover up problems or even falsification, are hazards against which both operators and regulators must constantly guard. The recurrence of events with these characteristics makes it clear that the promotion of a strong safety culture should always be viewed as "work in progress".

As the nuclear industry becomes increasingly international, IAEA Safety Standards are used as a reference point by an ever greater number of countries and serve as a benchmark for IAEA safety review services. Last year we began offering, for the first time, an Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS), which combined previous services ranging from nuclear safety and radiation safety to emergency preparedness and nuclear security. IRRS missions have been conducted in France, Australia and Japan over the past year. This is contributing towards a more active exchange of knowledge among senior regulators, and promoting harmonized nuclear regulatory approaches worldwide.

The IAEA's nuclear security programme has maintained its rapid pace of programme delivery. Among other efforts over the past year, the Agency assisted in improving physical protection at facilities in a number of States, helping to fix weaknesses in security systems at those facilities. We have also been able to assist many countries to improve their border detection capability through training in detection techniques and the use of relevant instruments.

The international community has also taken on board a variety of international instruments relevant to nuclear security. The rapid entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism is a welcome step forward. However, progress on ratifying the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material remains slow. Of the 128 States parties, only 11 so far have accepted the amendment. I urge all States to adhere to the Convention and accept the amendment.

The Agency is seen as playing an important role in the implementation of these instruments. To that end, we have started an effort to provide nuclear security guidance that would facilitate implementation.

As these and other nuclear security efforts have expanded and matured in recent years, the IAEA has begun to transition away from ad hoc approaches to strengthening nuclear security and towards more normative, sustainable national and international approaches.

The nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regime continues to face a broad set of challenges. Effective verification must be supported by four essential elements: adequate legal authority, state-of-the-art technology, access to all relevant information, and sufficient human and financial resources.

It is now more than 10 years since the model additional protocol was approved by the Board of Governors. The additional protocol enhances the Agency's access to nuclear facilities and relevant information, enabling the IAEA to draw credible conclusions regarding not only the peaceful nature of a country's declared nuclear programme, but also the absence of undeclared nuclear facilities. But to date just over half of the 162 States with safeguards agreements have brought additional protocols into force. This is far from satisfactory progress. More than a hundred States have yet to conclude additional protocols, and 31 States parties to the NPT have not even brought into force their required comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency.

Without safeguards agreements, the Agency cannot provide any assurance about a State's nuclear activities. And without the additional protocol, the Agency cannot provide credible assurance regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material or activity. Therefore, I urge all States that have not done so to bring these instruments into force.

At the invitation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, an Agency team visited the country in June to work out agreed modalities for verification and monitoring by the IAEA of the shutdown and sealing of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. These modalities were implemented in subsequent visits. As of 17 July, we were able to verify shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. I welcome the return of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the verification process. I also welcome the active cooperation the IAEA team has received from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Agency looks forward to continuing to work with it as the verification process evolves.

Regarding the implementation of Agency safeguards in the Islamic Republic of Iran, I would make four brief points.

First, the Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran. Iran has continued to provide the access and reporting needed to enable Agency verification in this regard.

Secondly, Iran has recently provided the Agency with additional information and access needed to resolve a number of long outstanding issues, such as the scope and nature of past plutonium experiments.

Thirdly, contrary to the decisions of the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter, calling on Iran to take certain confidence-building measures, Iran has not suspended its enrichment-related activities and is continuing with its construction of the heavy water reactor at Arak. This is clearly regrettable.

Fourthly, the Agency so far has been unable to verify certain important aspects relevant to the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear programme. However, Iran and the secretariat agreed in August on a work plan for resolving all outstanding verification issues. These verification issues have been at the core of the lack of confidence about the nature of Iran's programme. Iran's agreement on such a work plan, with a defined timeline — in response to repeated requests by the Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors — is therefore an important step in the right direction.

But, naturally, Iran's active cooperation and full transparency are key in this regard. If the Agency were able to provide credible assurance about the peaceful nature of Iran's past and current nuclear programme, it would go a long way towards building confidence and could help create the conditions for a comprehensive and durable solution. Such a solution would assure — and should assure — the international community about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, while enabling Iran to make full use of nuclear technology for economic and social development. I intend to report on the implementation of the work plan to the Agency's Board of Governors meeting next month.

Fifty years ago, the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme was in its infancy. Most member States lacked basic nuclear capacities, and the programme therefore focused on building up nuclear expertise and helping give birth to the institutions and facilities that would support the safe introduction of nuclear technology.

Today, the picture has changed, due to the evolution of skills, infrastructure and needs in IAEA member States. Several member States are leaving behind their developing country status. The development of nuclear capacities and infrastructure in some regions has paved the way for South–South cooperation, stimulating an increase in regional self-sufficiency and an expansion in collective, specialized expertise.

Opportunities for cooperative ventures — such as shared multinational management of common underground water aquifers, transborder programmes for the elimination of insect pests and other causes of disease, and jointly owned and managed nuclear power plants — are coming to the drawing board, adding new significance to technical cooperation. These are clearly positive trends.

After prolonged discussions, the Board of Governors recommended in July a budget for 2008-2009. This process has once again highlighted the urgent need for adequate resources to ensure effective delivery of the IAEA programme as mandated by the Statute and as requested by its member States. The IAEA remains underfunded in many critical areas, a situation which, if it remains unaddressed, will lead to a steady erosion of our ability to perform key functions. This is not a sustainable approach to meeting the Agency's financial needs.

To remedy this untenable situation, I have tasked the secretariat with conducting a detailed review of the nature and scope of our programme in the next decade — in the light of our statutory obligations, decisions of the IAEA policy-making organs and foreseen high priority activities — and what resources would be needed to fund these activities.

We have given a name to this study — "20/20" — reflecting our effort to look ahead to 2020 with the clearest possible vision. I intend to set up a high-level panel of experts to review the report, including providing guidance on appropriate funding levels and mechanisms, before submitting the report to our Board of Governors. This will help to clarify expectations about the IAEA's mission in the coming years and how these expectations can be matched by the necessary financial and human resources in a predictable and assured manner. The Agency's critical missions in the fields of development, safety and security, and verification deserve no less.

Fifty years after the Atoms for Peace initiative, I believe the time has come to think of a new framework for the use of nuclear energy, a framework that accounts for both the lessons we have learned and the current reality.

This new framework should include swift and concrete action to achieve several things. The first is robust technological development and innovation in nuclear power and nuclear applications. Secondly, a new multinational framework for the fuel cycle is needed, both the front and the back ends, to assure supply and curb proliferation risk. Thirdly, there should be universal application of comprehensive safeguards and the additional protocol as the standard for nuclear verification, to enable the Agency to provide assurance about declared activities as well as the absence of undeclared activities. Fourthly, the linkage between non-proliferation and disarmament should be recognized. From that arises the need for concrete and rapid progress towards nuclear disarmament through deep cuts in existing arsenals, downgrading of alert levels for deployed nuclear weapons and the resuscitation of multilateral disarmament efforts, starting with bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and beginning negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Fifthly, a robust international security regime is needed in the light of the diverse threats we face, as is, sixthly, an effective and universal nuclear safety regime, a cornerstone for any expansion in the use of nuclear power. Seventh, there must be sufficient funding for the Agency to meet its increasing responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner.

At the beginning of this statement, I highlighted some of the challenges and achievements that stand out from a review of the Agency's history. I believe that it is when we view the history of the Agency in its totality that we can really understand the concept of Atoms for Peace. Our mission is critical in both good times and bad. Our professionalism, impartiality and independence are vital, both publicly and behind the scenes.

As I said in Oslo a couple of years ago, when we were honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, another landmark in our history, "a durable peace is not a single achievement, but an environment, a process and a commitment". It is with this understanding that we look to the future.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.5.

Mr. Skoknic (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As Chairman of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), I thank the Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for the introduction of the annual report of the work of the Agency for 2006 and the important additional information he has given us this morning on the Agency's main activities during the period covered.

The Director General's succinct statement gave us a comprehensive overview of the diverse challenges faced in carrying out the functions and responsibilities entrusted to the Agency, as well as its limited resources. I would add that the Board of Governors works very closely with the Director General and his efficient and professional secretariat to define priorities and rationalize its work.

On behalf of the delegation of Chile, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.5 on the annual report of the IAEA, in a version dated 26 October that contains technical corrections. I shall refer to the technical corrections at the end of my statement.

The draft resolution enjoys the support of nearly 90 delegations, which I will not mention individually, in order not to unduly lengthen my statement. They are listed in documents A/62/L.5 and A/62/L.5/Add.1. We thank all the sponsors for their support for the draft resolution. The list of sponsors is still open.

The draft resolution reflects the broad consensus among the member States of the Agency. That consensus was reaffirmed during both the consultations held at Headquarters in Vienna and at the various consultation forums here in New York. I should add that there was a general understanding during the Vienna consultations that the draft resolution would be neither amended nor renegotiated in New York.

The draft resolution is a very simple and brief factual text based on the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its previous session. It takes note of the annual report of the Agency and of the resolutions adopted by the IAEA's General Conference, held in Vienna between 17 and 21 September.

In addition, the draft resolution reaffirms strong support for the indispensable role of the Agency in encouraging the development and practical application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, in technology transfer to developing countries and in nuclear safety, verification and security.

The brief draft resolution concludes with an appeal to Member States to continue to support the work of the Agency.

The technical corrections were made in order to make the draft resolution before the Assembly today identical to that adopted in Vienna. They include minor details, such as the inclusion of the proper acronym for the IAEA in English and the word "Agency" in some paragraphs, as well as a specific reference to the dates of the fifty-first session of the General Conference, namely, 17 to 21 September 2007.

The large number of sponsors and the positive dialogue that has taken place with various delegations makes me hopeful that the draft resolution will be adopted without the need for a vote.

Mr. de Lemos Godinho (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The EU commends the secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, its Director General, for the excellent work done by the Agency during the past year. We also thank the Director General for his report on the IAEA's activities in 2006.

The member States of the EU welcome the outcome of the fifty-first IAEA General Conference, held in Vienna between 17 and 21 September 2007, including the resolutions and decisions adopted.

As in the past, the European Union is a co-sponsor of the draft resolution on the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The European Union fully supports its contents. With over 75 co-sponsors, the draft resolution reflects broad agreement among the IAEA's member States. We sincerely commend the efforts of the Chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors and hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The three pillars of the Agency's Statute — verification, safety and nuclear applications — are more valid than ever today as nuclear threats increase all over the world. The European Union is therefore profoundly committed to the contents of the pillars, as they are responsible for a major contribution to promoting peace and security in the world.

The European Union reaffirms its full support for the work of the Agency in pursuing the objectives of peaceful nuclear cooperation and nuclear safety. Furthermore, we recognize its indispensable global role in nuclear verification.

With regard to nuclear security in particular, we wish to refer to the Agency's Nuclear Security Fund, which the European Union continues to support. We call on all States to commit themselves to financing of the Fund.

The Agency's comprehensive safeguards agreements and the additional protocols constitute the current Agency verification standard. The European Union regards them as prerequisites to an effective and credible safeguards system.

The European Union is working towards making the additional protocols a condition for the supply of nuclear exports. All European Union member States have had additional protocols in force since May 2004. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign an additional protocol without further delay. We also urge all States that have signed but not yet brought into force their respective safeguards agreements and additional protocols to do so without further delay, as both strengthen the international non-proliferation regime, contribute to the security of all States and increase the confidence necessary for international cooperation in the exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Through our joint action under the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, we support the Agency's activities in nuclear security, verification and the strengthening of national legislative and regulatory infrastructures for the implementation of international instruments in the areas of nuclear security and control of nuclear and other radioactive materials.

Increasing the capabilities of States to detect and respond to illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials is another major field of cooperation between the European Union and the Agency.

The safety and security of radioactive sources and the role of the Code of Conduct adopted by the Agency's General Conference in 2003 are of the utmost importance. The European Union is therefore committed to following the Code, in accordance with the European Directive on the control of highly radioactive sealed sources and orphan sources. The European Union urges all countries to declare their political commitment to the Code and to implement the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources.

The Agency continues to be of critical importance to the global fight against nuclear terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons. That is another reason why all Agency members greatly value its impartial expertise.

The European Union regrets that more than a hundred States have yet to sign and bring into force additional protocols. We urge those States to do so without delay.

Just last July, the Agency officially turned 50 years of age. As was underlined at the time, the Agency has contributed decisively to diminishing all the risks associated with nuclear activities related both to civil security issues and the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The European Union takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to the Agency for the benefits its work have brought for a more peaceful and safer world.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the Agency. It is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on this year's report of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to make this statement on behalf of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) and its associated States: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Let me first congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly and convey to him the support of the countries to which I have just referred as he conducts his work.

MERCOSUR and its associated States would also like to thank Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his presence here today and his introduction of the Agency's annual report on its work. MERCOSUR and its associated States would also like to express their gratitude for the presence of Ambassador Milenko Skoknic of Chile, who introduced draft resolution A/62/L.5, "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency", in his capacity as Chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, has become a key multilateral forum in the area of promoting activities for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Our countries value highly their relationships with the Agency. We congratulate the Director General on the professionalism and impartiality with which he carries out his great responsibilities.

It is important to maintain a balance between the Agency's three main pillars: technology transfer, safety and verification.

MERCOSUR and its associated States would like to emphasize the need for all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to strictly adhere to the goals of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that regard, we reiterate the inalienable right of States to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with international commitments and in line with article IV of the NPT.

I also emphasize that any attempt to redefine the delicate balance between Treaty rights and obligations that puts into question the legitimacy of the aspirations of States to the technological development of nuclear energy for solely peaceful purposes can contribute to undermining the system established by the Treaty, which enjoys widespread acceptance.

We note with interest the debate regarding initiatives to multilateralize the fuel cycle.

MERCOSUR and its associated States express their full support for the authority of the IAEA as the competent body to verify compliance with the obligations entered into under the safeguards agreements of respective member States.

We welcome the new member States of the IAEA: the Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Nepal, Bahrain and Cape Verde. We also congratulate Ecuador on having been elected a member of the IAEA's Board of Governors.

We would also emphasize the value we attach to international cooperation and technical assistance at the multilateral level through active participation and collaboration with the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme and the Regional Co-operative Agreement for the Advancement of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has been chaired by Venezuela since last September.

We are also pleased to acknowledge efforts by the Agency and member States to strengthen international cooperation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management. In particular, we would like to highlight the progress made in the various activities aimed at maintaining and enhancing security — for example, those relating to information and communications networks for radiation and nuclear safety — as well as those intended to strengthen national regulatory infrastructure for the control of radioactive sources.

We also recognize the efforts of the IAEA's secretariat and member States in the areas of education and training on radiation and nuclear safety.

We would also like to point to the effectiveness of the verification system implemented by the IAEA as a mechanism to reassure the international community about the peaceful purposes of nuclear programmes. Nevertheless, we believe that, with the assistance of member States, efforts must continue to put in place greater efficiencies in the implementation of safeguards.

Allow me to refer in particular to the Common System for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials used by the Argentine-Brazil Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), as well as the valuable cooperation between ABACC and the IAEA.

We also wish to emphasize the IAEA's positive outcomes in achieving its goal of facilitating the use of nuclear science to sustainably address the socio-economic needs of member States through the safe use of nuclear energy, including with regard to food production, human health, water resources management, environmental protection and industrial applications.

Faced with new medium-term projections of a substantial expansion in the use of nuclear power, and aware that access to adequate and reliable sources of energy is essential for development, our countries recognize the invaluable support that the Agency can continue to give member States that are exploring the possibility of introducing or expanding their use of nuclear energy.

We also agree with the Agency's assessment that scientific and technological research should focus on new reactor designs of varying power that are more efficient and more widely available, can be built more quickly and require lower capital investment.

With regard to the management of spent fuel and waste, we believe that the management and disposal of this long-term fuel remains a challenge in view of the rising expectations of nuclear power and rising inventories of spent fuel. We appreciate the efforts that the secretariat continues to make on options for the final geological disposal of high-activity waste, long-term waste or spent fuel.

We also acknowledge the work done by the IAEA in the area of safety and security of nuclear materials and installations. Additionally, we welcome the improvement it has made in regard to the safety of nuclear installations and the safe maintenance of nuclear materials.

We would like to draw attention to the September 2006 publication of "Fundamental Safety Principles", a set of 10 new principles which consolidate and replace the previous publication on the subject and constitute the basis of requirements for the safety of nuclear installations as well as action to be taken to protect people and the environment from exposure to ionizing radiation.

Finally, let me express our support for the IAEA's efforts against nuclear and radiological terrorism, and our support for its activities aimed at promoting the universal application of international legal instruments relating to the physical protection of nuclear materials and facilities and radioactive sources.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group.

We thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, for presenting its report for 2006 and for the update on developments in 2007. We also commend the IAEA for the efficient discharge of its mandate.

The growing interest of Member States in nuclear energy as a source of electricity heightens the responsibility of the IAEA, which should support the process of strengthening developing countries' use of nuclear energy to meet their needs while mitigating the environmental impact of increased energy production and consumption.

We welcome measures taken to ensure the reliability of nuclear power plants around the world, especially of previously shut-down reactors, and plant-life management for long-term operation. We urge all Member States performing reliability assessment procedures to fully involve the IAEA in order to ensure that the highest standards of safety and security are observed. We welcome the extension of assistance offered by the Integrated Regulatory Review Service.

The decommissioning of nuclear facilities should be carried out in full awareness of the threats facing humankind, especially nuclear terrorism. We commend the assistance offered to member States for the evaluation and decommissioning of former nuclear facilities and also for cleaning up sites of dismantled nuclear power plants. We rely fully on the IAEA for steps to harmonize safety standards and strengthen regulatory infrastructure. We are pleased to note that the IAEA is making efforts to identify — and appropriately respond to — key challenges in this field.

The growing interest in nuclear energy as a source of electricity increases the importance of efforts to develop innovative technologies for nuclear power generation. In this respect, we welcome the upgrading of the IAEA's International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles to its Phase-II, aimed at ensuring improved economy and safety, with a special focus on the development of small and intermediate-sized reactors that are safe and affordable. Africa has made a significant contribution to these efforts. In this context, we commend South Africa for the development of the 165 megawatt pebble bed modular reactor.

We urge the IAEA to enhance its research and development activities in order to find reliable solutions to the problems of the management of spent fuel and high- level waste in order to preserve the life cycle on earth. In the same vein, we welcome various proposals aimed at establishing reliable supply sources of nuclear fuel, including that concerning the creation, under the auspices of the IAEA, of a real or virtual fuel bank that would operate on the basis of apolitical and non-discriminatory non-proliferation criteria. We encourage the Agency to take the lead in developing credible international supply options to induce member States to build mutual trust in this area.

Such endeavours increase transparency and completely depoliticize the supply of nuclear fuel for peaceful use. They also secure the inalienable rights of developing countries, in keeping with agreed nuclear non-proliferation norms. We support the incremental approach, with multiple assurances in place, recommended by the Director General, and welcome the establishment of the International Steering Committee on Denials of Shipments of Radioactive Materials to ensure that decisions made in this area are scrutinized, to the benefit of all parties involved.

We note with great interest the Agency's activities as regards the development and sharing of other peaceful applications of nuclear energy, especially in the fields of medicine, food supply and agriculture, pest-control and water resource management. We encourage the Agency to step up its efforts to mobilize resources to enable the broad dissemination of knowledge about available applications. We thank the generous donors who contributed to the increase registered in the resources mobilized for this purpose in 2007.

Notwithstanding the efforts made to enhance the safety and security of nuclear energy activities, incidents and emergencies cannot yet be totally excluded. The IAEA has carried out various measures to enhance preparedness, as well as early and adequate responses. We urge Member States to fully support the steps it has taken. In this respect, we call for the universality of the international legal instruments on nuclear safety and security.

We welcome the wide variety of technical cooperation activities developed by the Agency, particularly the adoption by the Commission on Safety Standards of a roadmap for updating the transport regulations, and publishing a new edition in 2009, and the inter-agency cooperation to this end.

The African Group attaches great importance to initiatives by the Agency to assist member States to improve their radiation detection capabilities with handheld and fixed instruments. Such assistance should be extended to African countries in the framework of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

As regards verification activities, the Agency has fully demonstrated that it is the sole international authority on which the international community can rely for assurances regarding the peaceful uses of nuclear materials. We call on all States that are developing nuclear activities to conclude with the Agency comprehensive safeguards agreements in order to bring about the universalization of the safeguards system. We encourage all States to conclude additional protocols and to cooperate fully with the Agency for their implementation.

The African Group welcomes the efforts made by the Agency to promote such cooperation. We rely on it to pursue implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action that African Energy Ministers adopted at the ministerial Conference held in Algiers on 9 and 10 January 2007. The Ministers pledged in the Declaration to promote and enhance nuclear safety and security within a global approach aiming at accountable use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in full compliance with the non-proliferation norms.

Finally, the African Group stresses the need for a cooperative approach to the settlement of international disputes related to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and welcomes recent progress with regard to current cases under consideration. We welcome the prospect of the return of IAEA personnel to conduct monitoring and verification in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as agreed between the Agency and that country.

We call for the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and for the full cooperation of all parties concerned for the peaceful settlement of all pending issues in this regard.

In conclusion, the African Group reaffirms its full support for the Director General of the IAEA and the endorsement by African States of the Agency's indispensable role in assisting developing countries, particularly African States, in the peaceful practical application of atomic energy and the acquisition of related technologies.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are glad to welcome the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, and to thank him for presenting the Agency's annual report.

Russia was one of the founders of the IAEA and has always actively supported its work. Over the half-century of its existence, the Agency has become a prominent and influential organization. Today it enjoys well-deserved authority and seeks to ensure that nuclear energy is used in the safest possible way, and exclusively for peaceful purposes. Its activities are marked by a high degree of professionalism and lack of political opportunism. We are sure that during this age of renaissance of nuclear energy the IAEA's role and importance will grow. We commend the efforts of Mr. ElBaradei, to whom the Agency largely owes its success.

The IAEA is a unique international body with the authority to assess compliance by States with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We favour further development of its verification mechanism and its oversight activities. Special attention must continue to be given to universalization of the additional protocol to the Safeguards Agreement as an essential instrument for increasing the efficiency of the IAEA safeguards activities to verify compliance by States with their NPT obligations.

On 3 October this year the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, signed a federal law entitled "On the Ratification of the Additional Protocol between the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency to the Agreement between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the International Atomic Energy Agency on the Application of Safeguards in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics". The law was adopted by the State Duma on 14 September and approved by the Council of the Federation on 19 September.

Ratification of the additional protocol is a practical contribution by Russia to strengthening the IAEA's verification capabilities as regards compliance by the NPT States parties with their non-proliferation obligations. The additional protocol to the agreement on IAEA safeguards is an effective measure to ensure confidence by the international community in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and in timely identification of undeclared nuclear activities. We regard its universalization as one of the important areas of non-proliferation activities.

Russia has given, and will continue to give, assistance in strengthening the IAEA safeguards system, which is 25 years old this year. Means of providing that assistance include its national programme of scientific and technological support for the safeguards.

The threat that weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) may fall into the hands of terrorists increases the urgency of effective international efforts in the field of non-proliferation. The inhumanity of terrorist acts, including those in Russia, shows the need for reliable safeguards to prevent terrorists gaining access to WMDs, mainly through consolidation of joint actions to create a global system to address new challenges and threats — in particular, in the nuclear field.

In this regard, we note the development of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, put forward by the Presidents of Russia and the United States, which has already been subscribed to by 62 States. It primarily seeks to mobilize the efforts of States to fulfil their obligations under the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We believe that implementation of the Initiative is significantly strengthening and expanding the work done by the IAEA, which has observer status to the Initiative.

We are pleased with the expansion of interaction between the IAEA and the Security Council Committee established by the Council's resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of WMDs.

This year the IAEA has given significant attention to developing its efforts to ensure compliance with non-proliferation norms. In the nuclear field, this means the development of practical measures to ensure access to the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy for countries that faithfully comply with their commitments.

The initiative by the Russian President, Mr. Putin, to develop a global nuclear energy infrastructure, with the creation of international centres providing nuclear fuel cycle services, is designed to carry out that task. It envisages creating international centres to provide nuclear fuel cycle services. As a first step, Russia has established in Angarsk an international uranium enrichment centre. It will give States the possibility of guaranteed access to uranium enrichment capacities to meet their nuclear fuel requirements, without the need to set up their own nuclear fuel cycles. Founded by Russia and Kazakhstan, the centre is open for the participation of third parties, without any political conditions. It is now completing the IAEA safeguards compliance procedures.

We also support other initiatives aimed at resolving the issue of large-scale development of nuclear energy based on international cooperation. The United States-Russia Declaration on Nuclear Energy and Non-proliferation Joint Actions, adopted on 3 July this year, aims at merging those initiatives to establish a new format for international interaction in nuclear energy development. All interested States — those that have the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear technologies and those that only plan to use nuclear energy — can take part in that work.

The IAEA plays an important role in the development of innovative nuclear technologies in support of the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO) implemented in the framework of the Russian President's initiative on energy support for the sustainable development of humankind, a very important step in solving problems of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the earth's environmental recovery.

We commend the progress made in recent years in regard to nuclear safety. With active IAEA participation, it has become possible to achieve great success in increasing the safety of nuclear power plant operation and the handling of radioactive materials, sources and wastes.

We support IAEA activities in the area of technical cooperation with and assistance to the developing countries.

I should also like to mention certain prominent aspects of the activities of the IAEA.

Complex problems call for comprehensive approaches. That is true of the situation around the Iranian nuclear programme. We are pleased with the cooperation that has begun between Iran and the IAEA to resolve the outstanding issues. Agreeing and implementing the work plan between the Agency and Tehran is a step in the right direction. The search for a comprehensive political and diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear programme must continue, and the emerging positive trends must be bolstered. There is no alternative to the peaceful resolution of this problem.

A graphic example of that is the situation around the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. On the whole, we assess positively the work done in the format of the Six-Party Talks to resolve the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula. The first stage of denuclearization has been accomplished successfully. Concrete steps must now be taken to implement the second stage.

I reaffirm our support for the draft resolution on the IAEA report. As a sponsor of the draft resolution, Russia fully believes in the importance of the Agency's work, and is sure that it will be continued, in the interest of strengthening international security.

Mr. Cheng Jingye (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, the Chinese delegation expresses its sincere thanks to Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his detailed report on the work of the IAEA during the past year.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the IAEA. Over the past half century, it has had remarkable achievements in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The international community greatly appreciates its work and achievements. On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I extend my congratulations to the IAEA. As it always has, China will support the IAEA in playing a greater role in the promotion in a balanced manner of the two major objectives to which I have referred.

We are pleased to note that the IAEA made much progress in technical cooperation in 2006, when there was a clear increase over the previous year in new technical cooperation resources, the rate of attainment and the rate of programme implementation. Technical cooperation programmes have made a positive contribution to the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by member States. We hope that the IAEA will make more inputs and spur member States to attach greater importance to technical cooperation.

China maintains comprehensive cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy with the IAEA and member States. China actively supports and participates in technical cooperation programmes under the aegis of the IAEA. In 2006, China carried out 26 national technical cooperation projects and 50 regional and transregional projects in nuclear power generation, nuclear physics, nuclear chemistry and nuclear engineering technologies.

China has always supported and taken part in IAEA activities to enhance nuclear security and safety. In 2006 China began participation in the IAEA's Illicit Trafficking Database, relating to nuclear and other radioactive materials. We also established in Beijing the Joint Training Centre on Nuclear Safeguards and Security, which will not only train experts on nuclear security and safeguards for China, but will also provide relevant services to other member States in the region.

China has also made specific arrangements with the IAEA on nuclear security cooperation. The two sides will cooperate on nuclear security at major public events, including the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

With regard to nuclear non-proliferation, China supports the IAEA's unremitting efforts to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the safeguards system. It is our hope that the IAEA will further improve and strengthen the universality and effectiveness of the additional protocol system.

The IAEA has also played an important role in resolving regional nuclear issues. In addition to conducting monitoring and verification on the shutting down and sealing of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it has made progress with Iran in clarifying outstanding issues concerning that country's nuclear programme. China appreciates the IAEA's objective and just positions in addressing relevant issues, and supports the Agency in continuing its efforts.

China takes this opportunity to reaffirm its support for preservation of the international nuclear non-proliferation regimes, as well as its opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We believe that regional nuclear issues should be resolved peacefully through diplomatic negotiations on the basis of dialogue and consultation on an equal footing, so as to maintain global and regional security and stability. Together with other parties concerned, China will continue to play a constructive role in the resolution of such issues.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): This debate is taking place at a special time. We are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which deserves our recognition for its important role on the international scene.

Cuba is proud of being a founding member of the IAEA. We will continue to fully support its work.

The world is in the midst of an unprecedented energy crisis. We must take urgent action. Oil prices are rising daily, having reached levels unimaginable just a few years ago. Today there is a greater need than ever for feasible alternatives and sustainable sources of energy. In that regard, Cuba commends the efforts made in the framework of the IAEA for capacity-building and increasing awareness of electricity generation by nuclear power.

We reject any attempt to use the supply of nuclear fuel as a means of political or economic coercion, or as a way to establish a monopoly over its distribution by a few countries.

Cuba attaches special importance to cooperation between developing countries. We reiterate our support for the Regional Co-operative Agreement for the Advancement of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARCAL) as a key mechanism to foster cooperation in matters of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes among the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean.

The results of implementation of the action plan for the strategic alliance between ARCAL and the IAEA are remarkable, as is its first specific outcome, elaboration of the regional strategic framework for Latin America and the Caribbean. Cuba also participates actively in the coordinated research programmes, whose importance and effectiveness are unquestionable.

We acknowledge the IAEA's efforts to strengthen infrastructure to address radiological emergencies. Cuba will continue to contribute to that objective with experts and in other ways.

This year we celebrate the seventeenth anniversary of the Cuban health programme to provide treatment to children from the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident. Under this programme, 23,000 patients — mainly from the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus — have been treated in our country. We reiterate Cuba's readiness to continue sharing our specialists' vast expertise acquired through this programme.

The criminal and illegal economic, commercial and financial blockade that the United States Government has imposed on Cuba for the last 47 years directly affects the technical cooperation that the IAEA provides to Cuba. The blockade significantly impedes our country's purchase of equipment and reagents. Last year there were several new cases of United States companies, or companies from other countries but with some United States capital, refusing to sell to the IAEA equipment bound for Cuba. Likewise, the United States authorities denied visas to Cuban specialists to prevent their participation in important IAEA technical meetings held on United States territory.

Cuba reiterates its categorical rejection of political manipulation of IAEA technical cooperation. Such manipulation is contrary to the Agency's Statute.

The inalienable right of States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, without discrimination and in accordance with their respective legal obligations, must be strictly respected.

Attempts by some to prejudge the peaceful or non-peaceful nature of certain countries' nuclear programmes are unacceptable. The IAEA is the only authority competent to verify the fulfilment of obligations incurred under the respective safeguards agreements of member States. No State, no matter how powerful, can usurp this mandate. There must be no pressure of any sort or wrongful interference in the Agency's working methods that may compromise its efficiency and credibility.

Cuba welcomes the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA's secretariat to settle outstanding issues. We commend and support the work plan agreed by the two parties. The intensive talks that led to its adoption prove the willingness of both parties to advance constructively towards a rational solution.

Some States furiously hastened to disqualify the text of the agreement, even before it was published, in a clear challenge to the favourable opinion of the majority of the international community. We reiterate our opposition to any attempt to make the resolution of this issue — or any negotiation — contingent on Iran's unilateral suspension of its nuclear fuel cycle activities. That is discriminatory and illegal, and it violates the principle of the sovereign equality of States enshrined in the Charter. Only unconditional dialogue, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, will lead to a resolution of this matter.

Moreover, we reiterate our support for the Six-Party Talks to find a long-term solution to the Korean nuclear question through diplomacy and dialogue. In this regard, Cuba welcomes the agreements for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, in whose implementation the IAEA has a key role.

Despite the proclaimed end of the cold war, there are 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world, more than 12,000 of which are ready for immediate use. Nuclear-weapon modernization programmes have not stopped.

The mere existence of nuclear weapons and the doctrines prescribing their possession and use are a serious threat to international peace and security.

Cuba rejects the selective application of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Questions related to nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot continue to be relegated to the background, while horizontal non-proliferation is favoured. Nuclear disarmament is, and should continue to be, the highest disarmament priority.

I conclude by reiterating Cuba's full support for the IAEA's important work in promoting the peaceful, safe use of nuclear energy.

Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today the General Assembly is discussing an important agenda item closely linked with principle on which the United Nations was founded — the maintenance of international peace and security.

Having reviewed the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the State of Kuwait wishes to convey its sincerest appreciation to the Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, and all its staff for their efforts. We thank them for their tireless work to achieve the objectives and aspirations of the world's peoples and States by strengthening the principle of the peaceful use of nuclear energy for the positive benefit of humanity.

We also congratulate the permanent representative of Chile to the Agency, Mr. Milenko Skoknic, on his election as Chairman of its Board of Governors, and we thank him for submitting the draft resolution on the Agency's 2006 report. My country is a sponsor of the draft resolution.

Since acceding to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on 15 August 1986, the State of Kuwait has concentrated its cooperation with the Agency's Department of Technical Cooperation on implementation of a set of projects dealing with building its own capacities and establishing special laboratories to measure the level of radioactive isotopes found in Kuwait's water and soil.

Convinced of the importance of preparing national qualified cadres in the prevention of nuclear radioactivity and the safe handling of radioactive materials, my country took the initiative during the past three years to host regional workshops, in cooperation with the IAEA. We are also eager to continue sending trainees to participate in training courses held at the Agency's headquarters.

Through its nuclear technology programme, the Agency is playing a key role in the exchange and transfer of nuclear information and know-how to member States, especially to developing countries. The programme aims to facilitate the use of nuclear science and related technologies and to sustainably meet the economic and social needs of member States through the safe use of nuclear power in the fields of energy, food production, human health care, water resources management, environmental protection, industrial applications and nuclear medicine.

The efforts of the Agency under the three pillars of its mandate — technology, safety and verification — constitute the foundation to guarantee nuclear technology's contribution to the promotion of peace, health and prosperity. In that context, we endorse the contents of the Agency's annual report for 2006, transmitted by the note of the Secretary-General(A/62/258), with regard to the application of nuclear science and technology to treat cancer.

The Agency's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) seeks to assist developing countries to incorporate radiation treatment within the wider framework of preventing and combating cancer. In 2006 it helped to raise awareness about the rampant spread of cancer in the developing world and the need for comprehensive and multi-specialized planning to combat it. We commend the efforts to raise funds for PACT, including the number of scholarships, donations and material and in-kind contributions that have been secured. We acknowledge the contribution of the Fund for International Development of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, in which Kuwait participates actively, contributing $500,000 to PACT.

There is no doubt that in playing the vital role of preventing the use of nuclear power for military purposes, and promoting its safest possible use for peaceful purposes, the IAEA cannot achieve its goals without concerted efforts by all States. We note with increased regret that calls by the Agency on some countries carrying out advanced nuclear activities to adhere to the NPT and implement the IAEA's safeguards regime are going unheeded. That has an adverse effect on international peace and security.

In that context, the Middle East region will never achieve its goal of peace and stability as long as Israel remains the only country in the region that refuses to subject its facilities to the IAEA's safeguards regime. That is a major obstacle to achieving the universality of the NPT, one that greatly disrupts the effort to strengthen the NPT regime. The continuation of that irregular situation could be an incentive to other States of the region to attempt to acquire or build nuclear weapons on the pretext of the Agency's overlooking, or being lax in dealing with, countries that refuse to open their installations to inspection.

Israel's intransigence in refusing to cooperate with the IAEA could lead to more anxiety and tensions in the Middle East region and undermine the ongoing calls by other States regarding the need to free the Middle East, including the Gulf region, from all weapons of mass destruction, while acknowledging the right of States of the region to acquire the necessary experience in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Such knowledge must be made available to all within the framework of relevant international conventions.

In that regard, I note that the Supreme Council of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council has recommended a joint study by its member countries to create a joint programme in the field of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, in accordance with international standards and regimes.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, on the basis of our belief in the need to respect international legitimacy and the principle of resolving conflicts by peaceful means, the State of Kuwait calls upon the international community to join its efforts and continue to work to find a peaceful solution to the crisis, thereby sparing the Gulf region any crisis that can disrupt security and stability.

We welcome the recent agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA as an important step in dispelling fears and doubts with regard to Iran's nuclear programme. We hope that dialogue and cooperation will continue in a transparent manner until all international issues and concerns are addressed. We also hope that sufficient time will be accorded to diplomacy, so as to ensure that a peaceful solution can be implemented with flexibility, wisdom and responsibility on all sides. We hope for a successful outcome of the discussions currently taking place in Tehran between Iranian officials and a delegation from the IAEA.

In concluding, I express my country's hope that the international community will continue to support the work of the IAEA to ensure the complete and non-selective implementation of all international agreements pertaining to disarmament, including the NPT and its three main pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr. Chávez Basagoitia (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Peru expresses its gratitude for the presence of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and for his presentation of the annual report on the Agency's work.

We also thank Ambassador Milenko Skoknic of Chile for his introduction of the draft resolution "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency" in his capacity as Chairperson of the IAEA's Board of Governors.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Common Market of the South and its associated States.

Peru is firmly committed to all efforts to achieve comprehensive disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their delivery systems, which pose a threat to international peace and security. With regard to the effort to establish a robust and credible international regime, we would refer to our participation in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which countries of our region have signed and ratified. The spirit of that Treaty has inspired other regions, and should continue to guide them in achieving their objectives of peace and security.

Peru also participates in the Andean Zone of Peace and the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation initiatives, which the General Assembly has supported on various occasions.

We are aware of the danger that nuclear proliferation poses to the international regime. We therefore attach the utmost importance to strengthening all aspects of the regime, and will continue to contribute to that effort. In that regard, we reiterate our concern about the current stalemate in disarmament negotiations. We also reiterate our call for joint progress towards the fulfilment of international commitments.

With regard to nuclear energy, the international community has seen how the intergovernmental organization Atoms for Peace, created in 1957, has become the global centre of nuclear cooperation and how the IAEA is currently the principal instrument that the international community relies upon to prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms and to counter new threats of nuclear terrorism.

Peru, as a founding member of the IAEA, has actively contributed to its objectives, principally in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in the regulation of its use through adequate safety measures, and in the application of verification, safeguards and physical protection.

Peru would like to point out the support that the IAEA offers in its work to foster the development and practical application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to offer assistance in the transfer of technology to developing countries. My country benefits from this important technical cooperation with the IAEA, through the Peruvian Institute of Nuclear Energy and other related institutions.

As a sign of its commitment to the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the international regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Peru, signed, in 1999, the additional protocol to the IAEA safeguards agreements, as a contribution to the objectives of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. As a result, in 2006, Peru applied integrated safeguards.

Peru believes that the role of the IAEA can be strengthened so that it may serve as the main conduit for the transfer of nuclear technology, with a view to increasing cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. New challenges and realities make it necessary to review the role that the IAEA should play in the future in the areas of physical safety of nuclear waste, the illicit trafficking of nuclear material and verification in nuclear-free zones.

In this regard, Peru supports actions within the United Nations to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by State and non-State actors.

It also aims to see the implementation of the mechanisms adopted in existing international instruments, such as the NPT, as well as international disarmament commitments. We encourage transparency in nuclear matters and confidence-building measures to this end.

Specifically, Peru continues to favour dialogue and negotiation to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions and commitments to the IAEA. Peru is therefore pleased with progress on the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and welcomes that country's return to the IAEA verification process. My country hopes that this process will continue and deepen.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and a necessary step to achieve the ultimate goal of general and complete nuclear disarmament. In this context, even though Peru recognizes the right of any State to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, we believe that that must be conditional on strict compliance with non-proliferation commitments and implementation of the IAEA safeguards regime, which complements and strengthens the international verification system. In this respect, we look forward to the report of the Director General on Iran's extension, transparency and cooperation in resolving outstanding verification matters.

The current global situation demands strengthening the credibility of the international regime for disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. To this end, we must enhance the role of the IAEA, both in its control and verification capacities and in its remaining responsibilities. Making better use of this tool will allow us to achieve the exclusively peaceful purposes of nuclear energy and avoid the spectre of proliferation by States or terrorist groups becoming a reality.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his valuable presentation of the report on the Agency's activities in various areas. This confirms the competence of the IAEA in performing its lofty mandate in achieving a balanced interest in the three main areas of its work: technology, safety and verification.

We add our voice to the statement by the representative of Benin on behalf of the African Group.

Five decades ago Egypt participated in the establishment of the IAEA, convinced of the Agency's role in the strengthening of international peace and promoting the responsible use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, thus serving development ambitions and responding to international needs in a wide range of areas.

Furthermore, the comprehensive safeguards regime applied by the IAEA in non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has become one of the most central international verification systems employed in the maintenance of international peace and security. However, that system remains far from universal, especially in the region of the Middle East, where all States except Israel have joined the safeguards regime, pointing to an ever more urgent need for intensified international efforts aimed at the application of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime in all States of the region, without exception.

Egypt is firmly convinced that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East will contribute to confidence-building and the achievement of comprehensive peace in the countries of the region. There is no doubt that the lack of stability due to the presence of nuclear facilities outside the comprehensive safeguards regime demands a more effective response, as this situation threatens to trigger an arms race that would endanger the security and stability of the entire region. This is particularly true given statements made to the media on Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons, an acquisition to which the international community has not yet effectively responded.

The right of non-nuclear-weapon States to acquire and employ peaceful applications of nuclear technologies is indeed inalienable, as clearly anchored in article IV of the NPT. At a time when the need of developing countries for clean and economical energy is growing rapidly, the importance of this right becomes more evident and more closely associated with the realization of development plans and the enhancement of economic and social standards of peoples, while contributing to the achievement of international peace and security. Egypt therefore believes that the IAEA indeed has a growing role in supporting sustainable development efforts and effectively contributing to the acquisition of nuclear power and the satisfaction of the growing nuclear power needs of non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT.

The importance of the role of the IAEA is growing, in light of the shortcomings, both qualitatively and quantitatively, affirmed by the international community regarding the transfer of nuclear technology from developed to less developed countries. It is regrettable that, instead of international cooperation being strengthened to address this imbalance, we see attempts to impose more unjustified restrictions and preconditions regarding the nuclear technology and materials required to develop peaceful nuclear programmes in non-nuclear-weapon countries.

These attempts have gone so far as to work towards producing reinterpretations of article IV of the NPT, reinterpretations that have nothing to do with the letter or spirit of the treaty and will only lead to further mistrust among its parties and add new, unhelpful challenges to the credibility and effectiveness of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime.

Although non-nuclear-weapon States have given up the military nuclear option and have temporarily accepted a discriminatory status vis-à-vis the nuclear-weapon States, non-nuclear-weapon States still face additional pressures aimed at imposing more obligations and restrictions on them in the form of additional safeguards, while ignoring the voluntary nature of any new international commitment and the inevitability of focusing first on the universality of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system, which is a necessary condition for any strengthening of it.

Egypt confirms the important priority that the IAEA technical cooperation work represents for it and other developing countries which benefit from such programmes for the use of nuclear technologies in the fields of, inter alia, health, agriculture, food, water resources, isotopes and radiation.

In this regard, Egypt welcomes the development and improvement of the IAEA technical cooperation strategy to better serve the developmental priorities of member States, including through the identification of vital fields which nuclear technologies can effectively support in the short- and medium-term. Accordingly, we reiterate the importance of strengthening the role of the IAEA in technology transfer through ensuring and increasing funds allocated for technical cooperation, that being one of its main statutory responsibilities.

Taking into consideration the role of the Agency as the international forum mandated to work multilaterally towards the application of the highest standards of nuclear safety in nuclear power reactors, and towards the extension of the benefits of nuclear power to developing countries, Egypt, in its efforts to rely on nuclear power in proceeding with its development course, closely follows the Agency's work in this field, in particular, through the International Project on Innovative Reactors and Fuel Cycles.

Egypt is also working on further expanding its cooperation with the Agency in order to enhance our national capabilities in the peaceful application of nuclear technologies as well as to explore increased benefits of such technologies for the purpose of generating electricity, and other peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

We look forward to the full support of the Agency for our endeavours.

Mr. Vundavalli (India): The delegation of India thanks the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for presenting the Agency's annual report to the General Assembly.

On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, it is gratifying to recognize the IAEA's unique place within the United Nations system. The prestige, credibility and authority of the IAEA in this century rest in very large measure on the consistent good work done by its secretariat, under the wise leadership of Mr. ElBaradei.

Over the last half-century, the Agency's and India's nuclear programmes have grown and evolved side by side. The IAEA's achievements in the past half-century have done much to contribute to the emergence of a nuclear dawn in the coming years.

The world today is on the threshold of a paradigm shift. On the one hand, demand for energy continues to rise, and it is clear that 70 per cent of growth will come from developing countries. It is imperative that this need be met if the benefits of development are to be accessed more equitably by the vast majority of underprivileged mankind in the developing countries. On the other hand, there is the challenge of addressing the serious consequences for future generations of unmindful and unsustainable use of fossil energy leading to global warming and climate change.

Nuclear power can certainly play an important role in this context, by helping to meet the ever-growing demand for energy without the serious environmental consequences associated with the use of fossil fuels. India therefore notes and supports all the Agency's activities related to the promotion of nuclear power.

We believe that the Agency has a crucial role to play in allaying the misapprehensions of the public and Member States about the safe design, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of nuclear power plants, as well as the waste disposal and environmental aspects, taking into due account current advances in the relevant areas of design and technology. We encourage the publication of IAEA technical documents, the organization of training workshops and technical conferences and the maintenance and dissemination of nuclear knowledge to help achieve these objectives.

India has been pursuing its robust three-stage nuclear programme designed to maximize the energy potential from its domestic uranium and thorium resources, which will contribute around 25 per cent of electricity generation in the country by 2050. The objective is to realize the huge energy potential that can be obtained from these nuclear energy resources without having to add to the global carbon dioxide burden.

The programme is moving ahead steadily, with the first stage, consisting of indigenously developed pressurized heavy water reactors (PHWRs), well into a commercially successful phase. The second stage has commenced with the construction of a 500-megawatt electric (MWe) prototype fast breeder reactor, which is now fairly advanced. The third stage is about to begin with the start of construction of a technology demonstrator, the 300 MWe advanced heavy water reactor.

Those three stages are being implemented sequentially to reach the goal of large-scale thorium utilization, and are linked through their respective fuel cycles, which are also well under way. During the calendar year 2006, the generation of electricity from domestic nuclear power plants was 17,794 million units (MUs). While Unit 4 of the Rajasthan atomic power project operated continuously for a record 373 days, Unit 1 of the Kaiga atomic power station recorded uninterrupted operation for 356 days.

We look forward to the possibility of opening up international civil nuclear cooperation. We expect such cooperation to be sustainable, free from interruptions and consistent with our national policy of a closed fuel cycle. Such initiatives also open up the possibility of the export of reactors and services.

India today is the only country to have a live technology, design and infrastructure for small PHWRs with a unit capacity of 220 MWe; these reactors have a great potential for export, particularly to countries with small grids that wish to begin nuclear power generation with relatively modest investments and infrastructure. Given the large manufacturing base and relatively low manufacturing costs, there is also a potential for India to become a manufacturing hub for equipment and components for the global nuclear industry.

India supports all the Agency's activities related to advanced technologies, namely, accelerator-driven systems and high-temperature reactors for non-power applications such as hydrogen production and nuclear desalination. We attach great importance to the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles programme, have been associated with it since its inception, and have contributed significantly to its progress. We are happy to note the continued growth in its membership, and stand committed to ensuring the successful implementation of its Phase 2 activities.

In the area of material technology, we note with approval the Agency's activities aimed at improving the utilization of nuclear fuel for both light water reactors and PHWRs through increased burnup and the associated degradation and failure issues. In this context, in December 2006 India hosted in Mumbai an international conference on processing, performance and phenomena, and a satellite conference on materials behaviour far from equilibrium, in cooperation with the IAEA.

India commends the Agency for its activities related to capacity building and nuclear knowledge maintenance for sustainable energy development, aimed at providing training to several member States in using the analytical tools and databases, as detailed in the report.

We take note of and appreciate the Agency's work programme and achievements in nuclear applications in food and agriculture; human health and nutrition; the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy; water resources management; protection of the environment; and industry. India has donated a state of the art teletherapy machine, Bhabhatron II, to the Programme, with Viet Nam being the intended beneficiary. We note and support the Agency's activities envisaged under the rubric of nuclear science.

In the area of nuclear security and physical protection, India has organized a number of workshops and training courses for the Asia-Pacific region under the aegis of the IAEA. So far, we have conducted four regional training courses on physical protection of nuclear installations, as well as regional training courses on the physical protection of radioactive sources. In addition, we have conducted regional training courses on advanced equipment and responding to criminal unauthorized acts involving nuclear or other radioactive material, and a regulatory authority information system training course.

India is among the first countries to deposit their instrument of ratification of the amendments to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We note with approval the round-the-clock operations of the Agency's Incident and Emergency Centre, the emergency preparedness review conducted by the Agency and the establishment of a centre for advanced safety assessments tools.

In the context of the safety of nuclear installations, we note with satisfaction the activities undertaken by the Agency to promote a safety culture in member States. In India, the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) completed peer reviews of the atomic power stations at Kakrapar, Narora, Kaiga, Rawatbhata and Tarapur. We have offered our third unit of the Tarapur atomic power project for a pre-startup peer review by a WANO team of experts. Similar reviews for the fifth unit of the Rajasthan atomic power project and the fourth unit of the Kaika atomic power project are also planned for the next year.

India attaches high priority to nuclear verification, and notes with approval all the activities undertaken by the Agency in a transparent and impartial manner. Our delegation has actively participated in the Special Committee on Safeguards and Verification, within the framework of the IAEA Statute, to consider ways and means to strengthen the safeguards system.

A global nuclear energy renaissance increasingly appears not just inevitable, but a necessity. However, it will rest on fragile foundations unless robust inclusive partnerships are built on the basis of trust and mutual understanding, functioning on a reliable and predictable basis. The adoption of closed fuel cycle options to maximize energy availability needs to be an integral part of that.

We have justifiable concerns about the risks related to the safety of the environment and proliferation arising from irresponsible behaviour of States and non-State actors. However, we need to be even more concerned about the vastly enhanced security risks to which future generations will be exposed as a result of the storage of spent fuel for tens of thousands of years.

There are, thus, risks and challenges, but they are within the professional competence of existing technology and institutional control. Answers can easily be found, if every responsible partner is seen not as a problem, but as part of the solution.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been a success story during the 50 years of its existence — in particular, in the pursuit of its dual purpose of promoting nuclear energy for development and ensuring nuclear safety and security — in spite of the numerous challenges it has faced.

The Philippines welcomes the report of the Agency, and recognizes once again its important role in promoting both peace and development.

The Philippines has been a member and a partner of the IAEA for 49 of the 50 years of Agency's life and has gained much from its collaboration with the Agency. That strong partnership has also helped the Philippines in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Philippines attaches great importance to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its vast benefits for all nations, particularly the developing world. My country and the Agency have expansive links in the area of technical cooperation. It is here that we have much success in terms of increasing agricultural and industrial productivity, the irradiation of food exports, access to clean drinking water and addressing environmental challenges.

My delegation is grateful to the Agency's Technical Cooperation Department — specifically, its Asia and Pacific division and the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, whose support and effective collaboration enabled the Philippines to achieve an implementation rate of 84 per cent for technical projects in 2006. Much of that success has filtered down to the grassroots level. The Agency's technical assistance has also enabled the Philippines Nuclear Research Institute to upgrade its multipurpose irradiation facility and non-destructive testing training centre, as well as to establish its national environment isotope laboratory.

My country's participation in the Regional Cooperative Agreement's projects on the environment, such as those on air pollution, has enabled us to undertake several environmental studies using nuclear techniques. Data culled from those studies have provided important information in terms of implementing national laws and regulations on the environment.

Another essential programme is the Agency's Programme of Action on Cancer Therapy (PACT). The Philippines is pleased to note that the Agency has made that a priority activity, given the rise in the number of cancer patients, including in the developing world. My delegation believes that collaboration with PACT could lead to enhanced cancer-training capabilities in the region, in the context of the regional cancer training network. The Philippines is therefore grateful for the large contribution of donor countries, which helped built the Programme.

My delegation welcomes the comprehensive report of the Agency and commends its work in the areas of nuclear safety, verification, security and disarmament, and even social issues under its mandate, such as poverty, disease and hunger. Among the important activities of the Agency cited in its report are capacity-building and nuclear-knowledge maintenance for sustainable development.

Other vital aspects of the report are nuclear science, allowing for its application to economic development; food and agriculture, focusing on achieving food security through the application of nuclear techniques; human health, which deals with enhancing the capacities of member States to detect, prevent and treat various illnesses through nuclear technology; and, finally, water resources, where the sustainable management of this essential resource is improved through isotope application.

Nuclear security is another important area of concern. The support that the Agency provides to member States is essential to establishing effective national nuclear security regimes and preventing nuclear accidents. The Philippines agrees that the high standards of safety for nuclear power facilities should be maintained, especially given the increasing number of nuclear power plants. One nuclear accident can lead to massive environmental damage, endangering millions of innocent civilians.

In conclusion, I once again commend the Agency for its work in promoting the use of the atom for peace. Indeed, mankind will benefit from the atom's peaceful use. It can spur development, cure illnesses, increase the production of food and provide energy for our world's growing population.

My delegation urges all delegations to sponsor the draft resolution on the IAEA's report.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the 2006 IAEA report. I commend him very warmly for his commitment and dedication to the mandate of this important Agency and for its continuing work in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

My delegation expresses its sincere appreciation for the role of the IAEA in the promotion of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, under the three pillars of its mandate, including through technical cooperation between the Agency and my country. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for last December's official visit by the Director General to several countries in Asia, including Indonesia, as further proof of the Agency's attention to the importance of the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in our region.

Over the past several years the role of nuclear power has been shaped by many factors. We are pleased that the IAEA has been emphasizing the role of nuclear energy and nuclear technology for development. Indeed, it is becoming more evident that the IAEA has an important role to play in myriad aspects of human life, thereby contributing to meeting the world's growing energy demands and other welfare needs.

The report again highlights the rising expectations of nuclear energy in different parts of the world, especially for electricity generation. We are encouraged to learn that the Asia-Pacific region is one of the most dynamic in the world in terms of nuclear power development, and that national and regional projects have been conducted by the Agency under its Technical Cooperation Programme in response to the needs of member States.

Let me note, in this regard, that the Agency's promotion of the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy is particularly important for Indonesia and the region. As a country with more than 200 million people, bearing in mind the current situation of energy resources, we are now at the stage of dissemination of information and education to the public about the necessity for nuclear energy and its important role in our sustainable development. Along with its decision to embark on a nuclear power programme, Indonesia is also taking steps to promulgate relevant national regulation and continue its close cooperation with the IAEA in this regard.

Recently the IAEA has broadened awareness of the role of nuclear energy in the challenge of climate change. Climate change concerns have highlighted the advantages of nuclear power in terms of its minimal greenhouse gas emissions. This is an issue of great interest to Indonesia, as host of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Bali in December.

Indonesia has always attached paramount importance to technical cooperation with the Agency in connection with the transfer of nuclear science and technology to member States, and as a basic instrument for promoting peaceful uses of atomic energy for sustainable socio-economic development. In this regard, under an agreement with the IAEA, in 2007 and 2008 Indonesia will implement eight projects in the fields of energy, food and agriculture, human health and the environment.

The Agency has been working with Indonesia on radiation-induced breeding for inventing new varieties of plants, and many new and improved varieties of staple food crops were released up to 2006. This year, high-quality rice mutant varieties produced by irradiation techniques were planted in Indonesia on over a million hectares. Several new higher-quality strains of crops have been developed with IAEA cooperation.

Indonesia has also enjoyed the Agency's support in the commissioning of its first radiotherapy centre, in

Kalimantan, expected to be operational by the end of the year, and in the development of isotopic techniques for evaluating the effectiveness of tuberculosis drugs. Some IAEA technical cooperation projects have focused on using nuclear techniques to assess and manage Indonesia's underground water resources, monitor water quality and pollution in Indonesian rivers and improve livestock nutrition.

In the light of the increasing needs and requests of member States for technical cooperation, it is essential that the Agency have sufficient, assured and predictable resources for its activities. For that purpose, we suggest that proposals for a more sufficient, predictable and assured Technical Cooperation Fund be developed, with a view to strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's technical cooperation activities, without imposing an additional financial burden on member States, especially developing countries.

In view of the numerous challenges facing the IAEA, and the need to preserve its efficiency and performance, we should continue to seek ways to enhance its resources. To this end, we look forward to the upcoming study by a high-level panel of experts on the Agency's future programmatic and budgetary requirements, including the financing of the Technical Cooperation Programme.

My delegation also stresses the importance of the Agency's pursuing a more balanced allocation of the budget so as to reflect the equal importance of its three pillars and to maintain a balance between its various statutory activities and the need to promote technical cooperation.

For its part, Indonesia has been supportive of technical cooperation activities and has consistently paid its pledged annual share of the Technical Cooperation Fund targets. We will continue to do so in the future.

My delegation places great importance on the Agency's measures to strengthen nuclear safety and security. We share the view that measures to strengthen nuclear security should not hamper international cooperation in peaceful nuclear activities, the exchange of nuclear material for peaceful purposes and the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. As an archipelagic State, Indonesia is concerned about potential accidents or incidents during the transportation of spent fuel, high-level nuclear waste and radioactive materials by sea. We continue to support the efforts of the IAEA to strengthen cooperation and coordination to address this issue.

In the field of safety and security, Indonesia is a party to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. As to the security of radioactive sources and safety of the community and environment in the use of nuclear energy, we are pleased to announce that Government Regulation Number 33 of 2007 on the Safety of Ionizing Radiation and Security of Radioactive Sources, based on the IAEA Basic Standards, was enacted in June 2007.

Indonesia appreciates the work carried out by the Agency in implementing and strengthening safeguards and verification pursuant to the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As a State party to the NPT, we are committed to fully implementing the integrated safeguards, which could lead to strengthening global nuclear non-proliferation, pursuing nuclear disarmament and facilitating cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

At the regional level, as a party to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and bearing in mind the importance of such a zone in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, Indonesia, along with the other nine States parties to the Treaty, has initiated and tabled for the first time a draft resolution on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone at this sixty-second session.

We take note of the call for the development of new, multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle as a measure for strengthening non-proliferation and coping with the expected expansion of the use of nuclear power. As a party to the NPT, Indonesia fully supports the inalienable right of States parties to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in accordance with article IV. We reiterate that each country's choice and decision on the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be respected, without undermining its national policies or international cooperation agreements and arrangements for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and its fuel-cycle policies.

My delegation once again voices its concern about the continued inability to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and the continuously defiant attitude and policy of a single country in the region regarding placing its nuclear installations under the IAEA safeguards or acceding to the NPT. We caution that this could exacerbate the situation in the region and impact negatively on efforts to prevent proliferation there.

Turning to our own region, Indonesia stresses the importance of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. We are therefore pleased with the current positive development concerning the implementation of arrangements agreed between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the IAEA for monitoring and verification by the Agency of the shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities, as part of the complete declaration of the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic.

We welcome the work plan contained in the Understandings of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA on the Modalities of Resolution of the Outstanding Issues. We consider it to be a step in the right direction for continued and more intensive cooperation between Iran and the IAEA towards resolving the outstanding issues. We are of the view that timely implementation of the work plan is the key to a peaceful and statutory resolution of the Iranian issues, and favour more intensive dialogue on this issue among all interested parties.

In closing, I reiterate my Government's commitment to supporting the Agency in the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; in ensuring that the benefits of nuclear technology are shared globally, especially to benefit developing countries; in conducting safe, peaceful nuclear activities; and in providing a framework for curbing nuclear-weapon proliferation and moving towards nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): It gives me particular pleasure to extend a warm welcome to New York to Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and to express my appreciation for his presentation of the detailed annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As the IAEA is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year, I express my heartfelt congratulations to the Director General and the staff of the IAEA, whose work has greatly contributed to the Agency's healthy development.

In recent years energy demands have expanded and global warming has intensified. Nuclear power generation is expected to expand worldwide as a means to ensure a steady energy supply and combat global warming. Last May Japan introduced a new proposal, "Cool Earth 50", to address global warming. As part of a proposal to establish an effective post-2012 international framework, Japan will promote international efforts to expand safe and peaceful uses of nuclear power and provide assistance, such as infrastructure development, for the introduction of nuclear power to developing countries.

In introducing and expanding the use of nuclear energy, it is essential to ensure nuclear non-proliferation, safety and security. From that perspective, the role of the IAEA has become ever more important. The Agency has prepared a document, "Milestones in the development of a national infrastructure for nuclear power", which provides guidelines for infrastructure development when introducing nuclear power generation. Japan highly appreciates such an effort by the Agency.

Japan has strictly limited the use of nuclear energy solely to peaceful purposes since the enactment of its Atomic Energy Basic Law in 1955, when nuclear power was first introduced in Japan. Since then we have come a long way in gaining international confidence through, among other measures, faithful implementation of our IAEA safeguards agreement, concluded in 1977, the early conclusion of our additional protocol and the implementation of integrated safeguards.

In Japan further expanded utilization of nuclear energy is expected. Japan continues to uphold its established policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy through the strict application of safeguards.

The international community currently faces a number of serious challenges, such as the nuclear issues concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and the threat of nuclear terrorism. The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolutions against those threats demonstrates the strong will of the international community. Japan welcomes the concerted efforts of the international community to address those threats and calls upon all Member States to implement the relevant resolutions.

The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was held in Vienna from April to May this year, under the chairmanship of Japan's resident representative in Vienna, Ambassador Amano. Despite some difficulties, the Preparatory Committee reached common recognition of the need to promote all three pillars of the NPT: namely, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Committee therefore made a good start towards the success of the 2010 Review Conference. It was an important step in reinforcing the NPT regime.

The strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system is vital to reinforcing the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Japan believes that universalization of the additional protocol is the most realistic and effective way to achieve that objective. Japan, as the initiator of the Friends of the Additional Protocol, has been implementing various activities for that purpose, focusing on the Asian region. Progress has been made, with the number of countries that have concluded additional protocols increasing from 39 to 83 over the past three years. I take this opportunity to call upon those States that have not yet concluded additional protocols to do so as soon as possible.

The nuclear test proclaimed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in October last year, combined with its buildup of ballistic-missile capabilities, is a threat to the peace and security of not only Japan, but also East Asia and the entire international community. It represents a serious challenge to the NPT regime. In that respect, it is important that Security Council resolution 1718 (2006) be steadfastly implemented.

It is a welcome development that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has committed itself, in the Six-Party Talks outcome document issued on 3 October, to the declaration of all nuclear programmes and the disablement of the three facilities at Yongbyon, as measures to be taken in the second phase. That action follows implementation of the initial actions agreed earlier at the Six-Party Talks, including the shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. It is above all most important that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fully implement those commitments.

Japan continues to actively work towards a peaceful resolution of nuclear issues within the framework of the Six-Party Talks with a view to comprehensively resolving outstanding matters, such as abductions, nuclear and missile issues, settling the unfortunate past and realizing the normalization of relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the basis of the Pyongyang Declaration by it and Japan.

Japan has made a positive contribution to the Agency's monitoring and verification activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Iran regrettably continues to expand its uranium enrichment-related activities, in defiance of calls from the international community. Japan hopes that Iran will sincerely cooperate with the IAEA in the consultations currently being held between it and the IAEA in attempts to resolve outstanding issues. It should be noted, however, that resolving those outstanding issues alone will not remove all the concerns of the international community regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Iran has to make further efforts to restore the confidence of the international community by responding sincerely to the requirements set forth by the relevant resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors and the Security Council, including suspension of uranium enrichment-related activities and the heavy-water-related programme, as well as ratification and implementation of the additional protocol. Japan continues to work for a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the issue, in concert with the other members of the international community.

With many important challenges accumulating, the importance of the IAEA can only increase. I assure the Assembly of Japan's continued support for the IAEA in fulfilling its vital mission.

Finally, I would like to express our full support for the draft resolution submitted by Chile, of which we are a sponsor.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.37

General Assembly *Official Records*

Sixty-second session

37th plenary meeting

Monday, 29 October 2007, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Beck (Palau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 87 (*continued*)

Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Note by the Secretary-General (A/62/258)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.5)**

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): Let me start by thanking Director General ElBaradei for his comprehensive report on the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iceland is among the States sponsoring the draft resolution on the report of the IAEA.

The IAEA celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last July. Iceland would like to reaffirm its commitment to the organization and its valuable role in international nuclear cooperation and nuclear safety. The three pillars of the IAEA's Statute — safety and security, science and technology, and safeguards and verification — remain solid. But the verification of the peaceful uses of nuclear materials in order to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons is currently facing its greatest challenge. We as Member States cannot spare any effort to secure a high level of safety in all nuclear and radiological applications and installations. My country strongly supports international cooperation in order to maintain and improve safety in that area, and reiterates the important and indispensable role of the IAEA in that respect.

Iceland attaches great importance to the IAEA's technical cooperation work aimed at the use of nuclear technology in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. That includes the areas of human health, food and agriculture, nuclear science and the management of radioactive waste. Nuclear technology plays an important role in combating the spread of disease and hunger, in particular in developing countries. Iceland recognizes that valuable work, an makes an annual voluntary contribution to the IAEA's technology fund.

We welcome recent developments with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Iceland appreciates the swift response by the IAEA in February following the diplomatic breakthrough. The shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities and the implementation of verification and monitoring measures by the IAEA are important first steps. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to resume the implementation of its comprehensive safeguards agreement under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

With respect to the nuclear activities of Iran, we hope that the current work plan between the IAEA and Iran will lead to a resolution of outstanding questions. Effective implementation of the work plan is of course a prerequisite for any progress. However, we still have strong concerns concerning the implications of Iran's nuclear programme. We regret that Iran has not fulfilled its obligations under Security Council

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resolutions or the requirements established by the IAEA. The Government of Iran must take steps to build confidence with regard to the scope and nature of its nuclear programme. We urge Iran to ratify and bring into force the additional protocol to the comprehensive safeguards agreement.

In conclusion, the IAEA is indispensable for nuclear cooperation and global nuclear safety. I reiterate Iceland's full support for the organization, and our willingness to contribute to its work and cooperation efforts.

Mr. Gumbi (South Africa): My delegation would also like to thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the very insightful annual report of the Agency covering the year 2006. We commend the Agency for yet another elaborate and user-friendly report on achievements and shortcomings in the areas of technology, safety and verification, which are the three pillars of the Agency's mandate to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.

The annual report of the Agency for 2006 has once more strengthened our correctness in recognizing the Agency as the leading multilateral institution for ensuring the peaceful uses of nuclear energy as set out in article II of the IAEA's Statute. This annual report has also reaffirmed my delegation's belief that the peaceful application of nuclear energy has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the improvement of living standards, the fight against poverty and the promotion of sustainable development, thereby strengthening international peace and security and facilitating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Our meeting is taking place at a time when there is a worldwide increase in the number of countries that are considering the nuclear power option in their national energy mix to meet their energy demands. We are indeed in an era where nuclear power is suddenly gaining prominence because of the potential it has to place countries in a better position to enhance the security of energy supplies and to mitigate the discharge of carbon into the atmosphere, as the energy produced from fossil fuel accounts for about half of human-made greenhouse gases.

The rise in the demand for nuclear power comes with challenges and responsibilities. Nuclear material and its production have become harder to control. There is an increase in the number of countries seeking to master the nuclear fuel cycle to ensure a supply of nuclear fuel. In turn, mastering the fuel cycle, and the ability arising therefrom to enrich uranium or separate plutonium, brings more countries closer to a nuclear weapons capability. Needless to say, this all has a direct bearing on the Agency's verification activities, technical cooperation assistance, nuclear fuel management and nuclear safety and security.

My delegation is concerned that in budgeting for the Agency there are always inadequate funds for necessary technological innovation investments. South Africa believes that that situation needs to be corrected in order to extricate the Agency from the predicament of having to rely on one or a few countries' technical resources to carry out its verification mandate. That unjustified dependency has the potential to put into question IAEA's verification findings and will ultimately undermine the credibility of its verification function.

That near-crisis situation is further exacerbated by the small number of safeguards agreements between the Agency and its member States. That matter requires our urgent and serious attention, because there are some States that have yet to take the first basic step required by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to put into force comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency. We call on those States to fulfil their obligations under article III of the NPT as soon as possible.

The Agency's safeguards system is not a static one, but it needs to be adapted to changing circumstances. It is for that reason that South Africa supported — unfortunately, to no avail — attempts at the recently concluded IAEA General Conference aimed at strengthening the safeguards system through the incorporation into the safeguards resolution language directly derived from article III.B, paragraph 1, of the IAEA Statute, as well as from step 10 of the 13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The rejection of these proposals is a cause for concern for my delegation and seems to represent a tendency by some Member States to renege on commitments made when joining the Agency and on their previous undertakings made in the NPT. We also wonder if these negative developments are not a manifestation of complacency and the false belief that the safeguards system has been perfected.

Notwithstanding, South Africa recognizes the indispensable role that the Additional Protocol can play as an additional measure to provide the necessary confidence and the desired assurances that Member States apply their nuclear technology solely for peaceful purposes and that no declared or undeclared material is diverted to weapons programmes. South Africa believes that countries with access to advanced technologies bear a greater responsibility to provide such assurances and to build confidence in the peaceful nature of their nuclear programmes.

Inasmuch as the Additional Protocol is voluntary, South Africa believes that it is an important confidence- and security-building measure that continues to play an essential role in creating an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation but that it should not be used as a condition for supplying nuclear material. As stated in previous occasions, South Africa will continue to reject that discriminatory attempt.

In addition to strengthening the Agency's verification function in these challenging moments, South Africa believes the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund deserves urgent and decisive action. This Fund is a statutory and political commitment that needs to be realized. The technical cooperation projects of the Agency constitute important building blocks to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of water security, environmental sustainability, maternal and child health and the combating of disease, hunger and poverty.

Over the years, the developing countries have repeatedly stressed that the funding of the Agency's technical cooperation projects must be sufficient, predictable and assured. They have also stressed the need for the technical cooperation budget to be increased, as it is clearly not sufficient. South Africa believes that the time has arrived to conclusively correct the mistake of the past fifty years by incorporating the funding of technical cooperation projects into the regular budget.

Likewise, my delegation expresses its fullest support for the proposal of the Director General to engage a high-level panel of experts to study, review and consider options for financing the Agency's requirements. South Africa is of the view that the findings of this process should be engaged in a constructive manner and be carefully considered with a view to making appropriate recommendations.

The supply of nuclear fuel is a factor that will play a prominent role in the anticipated future growth of nuclear power. In this connection South Africa has been following with keen interest the debate and various proposals on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle, as well as developments in the area of research reactor conversion and highly enriched uranium repatriation.

With regard to the nuclear fuel cycle, South Africa has noted with deep concern that a number of proposals made on this matter during the last few years are geared towards restricting the right of countries to develop domestic capabilities. Such conditionalities do not only contradict the inalienable right of States to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as provided for in the NPT, but also exacerbate existing inequalities, including through the creation of another kind of cartel that would exclude full participation, particularly by States in full compliance with their safeguards obligations.

South Africa thinks that it is imperative to ensure that no unwarranted restrictions are imposed. What is required is a non-discriminatory approach that would assure the reliable supply of nuclear fuel, while fully respecting the choices of States and protecting their inalienable right to pursue peaceful nuclear programmes, consistent with their non-proliferation obligations.

South Africa is considering options for cooperation with other countries over the entire nuclear-fuel cycle, from the mining and processing of uranium through to nuclear power generation, fuel reprocessing and the disposal of nuclear waste. South Africa has also produced a draft nuclear energy policy and strategy paper for public comment. Given the scale of the intended South African nuclear programme and the need for regulatory efficiency, it is envisaged that all the regulatory functions — such as environmental, design, construction, operations, decommissioning and decontamination processes — will be centralized in a single nuclear and radiation safety statutory agency.

While South Africa acknowledges that prevailing proliferation concerns have prompted others to propose restrictions and controls over the legitimate peaceful uses of nuclear energy, it is important that such concerns be matched by reinforcement of the obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament.

My delegation would also like recall, for the benefit of this gathering, its position on research reactor conversion and highly enriched uranium (HEU) repatriation. As South Africa pointed out at the International Symposium on HEU in Norway in June last year, we are supportive of national efforts towards the conversion of civilian facilities from HEU to low enriched uranium (LEU), but we caution against attempts aimed at efforts related to the reduction of HEU for peaceful civilian purposes. Such national decisions are indeed laudable and, in our view, are contributing in a very real way towards minimizing the inherent risks associated with HEU.

However, if we are indeed concerned about and committed to reducing threats to our collective security, and not merely the real or perceived threats against a select few, we cannot exclusively focus on reducing reliance on HEU for peaceful purposes, without any real commitment and progress towards the elimination of HEU and other fissile materials that are primarily being used for military purposes. In South Africa's view, the threat to our very existence constituted by the continued utilization of such material for weapons purposes remains as real as ever.

Nuclear safety is fast proving to be an integral part of nuclear programmes and will require serious consideration as more countries are considering the introduction or expansion of nuclear power. South Africa commends the Agency for its work in the area of nuclear safety and supports the various safety standards, guides and requirements. South Africa welcomes the networking practices to improve the global nuclear safety regime and has taken the initiative to establish an African forum of nuclear regulators to share experiences and has requested the Agency to provide guidance and assistance in this endeavour.

South Africa is committed to the use of IAEA Safety Standards as a benchmark in the implementation of our regulatory mandate and supports the IAEA initiative related to the rationalization and harmonization of the Safety Standards. South Africa would like to recommend a greater harmonization of the requirements related to safety and those related to security, as those requirements are interdependent in many cases.

South Africa remains seriously concerned and shares the international community's concern over nuclear security. South Africa agrees that the threat of nuclear terrorism is one of the challenges the world faces in reaching our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Although each and every State has the responsibility to control and secure fissile material or other nuclear materials and to prevent such materials from being illegally obtained or used, relevant instruments can and should play an important role in strengthening our national and collective efforts in this regard.

The issue of protection against nuclear terrorism lies very much at the heart of South Africa's concerns as we may draw from the Agency's expertise and require equipment for the array of security measures to be put in place for the soccer world championship in South Africa in 2010.

In conclusion, South Africa believes that continuous and irreversible progress in nuclear disarmament and other related nuclear arms control measures remain fundamental to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation. The systematic and progressive elimination of all nuclear weapons and the assurance that they will never be produced again remains the only assurance against their use. That should remain our goal.

Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin, and are mutually reinforcing. The verifiable and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons should prevent the use of nuclear weapons, irrespective of whose hands they are in. That would effectively curb their proliferation, because one cannot proliferate what one does not have.

Last but not least, my delegation associates itself with the statement made this morning by the Ambassador of Benin on behalf of the Group of African States. South Africa will also support, and has co-sponsored, the draft resolution on the IAEA, which was introduced by the Chairperson of the Agency's Board of Governors.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me, at the outset, to express our gratitude to Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his tireless efforts and for the insightful report to the General Assembly on the main activities of the Agency during the year 2006.

The report indicates that the Agency is increasingly developing its activities in many areas of nuclear technology that are of great interest and importance to the human community. The IAEA was established with the principal objective of accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. The ever-increasing demands of member States for the use of nuclear science and associated technology to sustainably meet their socio-economic requirements underscore the need to ensure comprehensive fulfilment of the Agency's main responsibility.

It is a well-recognized fact that nuclear technology has broad peaceful applications in numerous fields — ranging from food production, human health, water resources management and agricultural and industrial applications to providing a renewable source of energy. In particular, the IAEA has a specific mandate in relation to nuclear power. Access to reliable and adequate sources of energy is essential for development. The demand for energy around the world continues to increase rapidly. That has led a number of countries, in particular developing countries, to embark upon planning for the construction of nuclear power reactors, as well as for significant expansion in their existing programmes.

As the report indicates, for the first time, the latest projections recognize that nuclear power will not only help to meet the increased demand for energy supplies but will also mitigate the discharge of carbon into the atmosphere. In that context, efforts to strengthen the Agency's technical cooperation activities aimed at improving the capabilities of developing countries in nuclear energy production, as a component of their energy mix, should be pursued as a matter of priority.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reaffirmed the important objectives of the Agency and recognized the inalienable right of all States parties to the NPT to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Under article IV of the NPT, States parties undertook to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In fact, the inalienable right of all NPT States parties to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, constitutes one of the three major pillars upon which the NPT is founded.

Notwithstanding such requirements, the cooperation of developed countries — as the main suppliers of sophisticated nuclear technology — with developing nations has remained at an unsatisfactory level. In fact, nuclear cooperation between suppliers and recipients has been beset by restrictions, obstacles and disruptions. Instead of promoting cooperation, the club of nuclear haves, which is laden with discrimination and a lack of transparency, was created, inter alia, to hamper the access of developing members of the NPT to nuclear power technology, under the pretext of non-proliferation concerns. To remedy that shortcoming, the IAEA could and should play a decisive role by vigorously pursuing balanced and non-discriminatory application of the provisions of the NPT and IAEA safeguards.

Moreover, it is unfortunate that, after 50 years of existence, the budget of the international cooperation section of the Agency remains unsteady due to its voluntary nature and the conditionality imposed by certain member States on its allocations.

The application of safeguards is among the main functions of the Agency. While great efforts have been made by the Agency to apply and promote the universality of the safeguards system to all relevant nuclear activities, it is distressing that some members of the Agency have yet to conclude their comprehensive safeguards agreements. We call on all such members to fulfil their obligations at the earliest possible time.

Furthermore, there is a dangerous trend at work that is moving in the opposite direction of safeguarding the NPT and ensuring its universality. Under that trend, those who have chosen not to accede to the NPT not only are not subject to any pressure to do so, but are also encouraged and rewarded in different ways. For an example, the Zionist regime has been allowed to acquire a large stockpile of nuclear weapons in the volatile Middle East region, and to defy the will of all the States of the region and the international community to turn the Middle East into a zone free of nuclear weapons.

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes to be its inalienable right. We have therefore invested extensive human and material resources in the field of nuclear power, within the framework of the country's overall economic plan.

As we have stressed time and again, Iran's nuclear programme is completely peaceful. All reports issued by the IAEA since November 2003 have been indicative of the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. The Agency has repeatedly reaffirmed that it "has not seen indications of diversion of nuclear material to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices". That assertion has also been attested to by the Director General of the IAEA in his various public statements. Nevertheless, in an unwarranted move orchestrated by a few of its permanent members, the Security Council has taken unlawful, unnecessary and unjustifiable actions against the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Indeed, Iran's peaceful nuclear programme poses no threat to international peace and security. Therefore, dealing with this issue in the Security Council is unwarranted and void of any legal basis or practical utility.

Without a doubt, the move to bring the Iranian nuclear file to the Security Council and the intention of the co-sponsors of the resolutions adopted thus far have been derived from their ulterior motives and narrow national considerations in order to deprive the Iranian people of their inalienable rights, rather than emanating from so-called proliferation concerns.

Despite the politically motivated actions by a few countries, which have led to the deadlock and interruption of negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, once again, taken a new initiative that has received worldwide support and appreciation. In that context, Iran agreed to take a major step in negotiating with the Agency on the modalities of dealing with the few outstanding issues. As a result of intensive negotiations which were held between the two sides, the final text of the mutual understanding, reflected in the Agency's document INFCIRC/711, was concluded on 21 August 2007 in Tehran.

Bearing in mind past experience in dealing with such technical issues with the Agency, it was agreed that all issues should be taken up in a sequential and well-defined time frame, rather than dealing with them simultaneously and without prioritization. In a very short period of time, two of the major remaining issues, namely plutonium experimentation and the contamination at the Karaj facility, were resolved.

According to the agreed work plan, the issues of P-1 and P-2 centrifuges are under extensive discussion. In order to carry these discussion forward, several meetings have been held between Iranian and IAEA officials in a professional and cooperative atmosphere. At present, the new round of such meetings is taking place in Tehran.

As the IAEA Director General reported to the Board of Governors, the agreed work plan is "a significant step forward". Therefore, it is essential to note that Iran's initiative has created a new and positive environment that necessitates the return of its nuclear dossier to the Agency's framework in full. In our view, the right path for the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue goes through dialogue and technical elaboration within its proper and legal context, which is the framework of the IAEA.

In the same vein, I wish to echo the view expressed by many delegations that the Iranian nuclear issue needs to be settled through multilateral means, and that resorting to unilateral measures would only exacerbate the situation and complicate its resolution. There is no doubt that the recent United States unilateral measures against Iran only seek to undermine the current negotiations and cooperation between Iran and the Agency. In this respect, it suffices to make it clear that no number of irrational United States policies will be able to dissuade us from pursuing our legitimate rights and interests. We have already enunciated our position on this issue in detail, both here in New York and in the capital.

Finally, the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran are determined to exercise their inalienable right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and to build on their own scientific advances in developing various peaceful aspects of this technology. Iran commits itself to its obligations under the NPT and does not request anything more than the exercise of its inalienable rights.

Mr. Park Hee-kwon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its sincere appreciation to Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his comprehensive report on the Agency's activities. We are pleased to take note of the Agency's recent achievements in the fields of technology, safety and security and verification, which are described in the annual report of the IAEA for 2006. In addition, my delegation commends the Director General and his staff for their dedication to fulfilling their responsibilities with integrity and professionalism.

As a strong supporter of the work of the IAEA, the Republic of Korea underlines the importance of promoting the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, and is committed to maintaining full cooperation in all areas of the Agency's activities. In this regard, my delegation would like to highlight some issues that we consider relevant to the future development of the IAEA.

First, we believe that the universalization of the Model Additional Protocol is an essential means for improving the current safeguards and verification regime. We fully share the Director General's view that only for those States with comprehensive safeguards agreements and the additional protocols in place will the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear material or activities be fully realized. In this regard, my delegation hopes that those States that have not done so will sign, ratify and fully implement additional protocols without undue delay.

Secondly, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the development of a new multilateral framework for the nuclear fuel cycle. My Government supports initiatives to develop a mechanism to provide reliable and equitable access to nuclear technologies and fuel while limiting proliferation risks. As a major user of nuclear energy, the Republic of Korea will continue to participate in and make positive contributions to the relevant discussions on this issue.

Thirdly, we believe that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be promoted, ensuring a high standard of nuclear safety and security. In this regard, the Republic of Korea will continue to support the Agency's efforts to build and strengthen an international nuclear safety and security regime and further enhance its cooperation with the Agency.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to briefly highlight the recent developments in the Six-Party Talks process. Since the resumption of the Fifth Round of the Six-Party Talks in February of this year, there has been significant progress in realizing the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005. On 13 February 2007, the Six Parties agreed on the Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement, taking that consensus forward another step by laying out specific actions to implement the Joint Statement.

The 13 February agreement paved the way for re-establishing the relationship between the IAEA and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, resulting in visits to that country by Agency teams and an agreement between the two parties on an ad hoc arrangement for monitoring and verification of the Democratic People's Republic's Yongbyon nuclear facility. Since July of this year, the Agency has been able to verify the shutdown of the Yongbyon facility and is continuing to implement the ad hoc arrangement, with the cooperation of the Democratic People's Republic.

My delegation welcomes the Agency's successful implementation of the ad hoc arrangement and reiterates its support and appreciation to the Director General and his staff for conducting the monitoring and verification activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in a timely, impartial and professional manner.

Following the 13 February agreement, another step forward was taken during the Second Session of the Sixth Round of the Talks, held in Beijing from 27 to 30 September 2007, at which the Six Parties reached agreement on the Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement.

According to that agreement, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will complete the disablement of the 5-megawatt experimental reactor, the reprocessing plant and the nuclear fuel rod fabrication plant at Yongbyon by the end of this year. It is expected that the actual disablement process will start in early November. In addition, the Democratic People's Republic will provide a complete and correct declaration of all of its nuclear programmes, in accordance with the 13 February agreement, within the same time frame. The other five parties also agreed, in turn, to take corresponding measures in accordance with the 13 February agreement.

If the declaration and the disablement measures are smoothly implemented, we believe that we can achieve the main process of abandonment of these nuclear facilities by next year. Completing these second-phase actions in a timely manner will give impetus to the negotiations aimed at achieving the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. To that end, my delegation hopes that the Six Parties will continue to take further steps without delay, in accordance with their commitments, towards the full implementation of the Joint Statement.

As the Six-Party Talks process continues, my Government will continue to work closely with all parties concerned for a peaceful resolution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue and trusts that the international community will continue to render its valuable support in that regard.

Mr. Figueiredo (Angola): On behalf of the Republic of Angola, it is my pleasure to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to preside over the work of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Allow me also to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. We are confident that under his able leadership the session will successfully conclude its work. He can be assured of our full support and cooperation.

This year, we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). For the past 50 years the organization has carried out its mandate with efficiency and credence. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded in 2005 to the Agency and to its Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei, was a tribute to the professional and impartial performance over the last half century. The Angolan Government would therefore like to reiterate its support for and full confidence in the Director General and the secretariat.

The Agency's report in document GC(51)/5 correctly reflects the work carried out by the organization during the year 2006 under the three pillars of its mandate, namely, technology, safety and security, and verification. It clearly illustrates that the Agency continued to carry out a wide range of activities related to the application of nuclear technologies in areas such as human health, food and agriculture, industry, water resources management, the environment, knowledge management and nuclear energy planning and production, thereby contributing to sustainable development in Members States, especially in the developing countries.

The Agency's Technical Cooperation Programme is the main statutory vehicle for cost-effective transfer of nuclear technologies and know-how to Member States. To encourage greater self-reliance, the Agency helps to build, strengthen and maintain national and regional capacities for using nuclear technology in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

The Technical Cooperation Programme helps developing countries in matching appropriate technologies to identified needs and in building relevant national technical competencies and expertise. In that context, we wish to underscore that the promotion of the peaceful applications of atomic energy constitutes a fundamental element of the core activities of the Agency and is of the utmost importance to developing countries for the improvement of their socio-economic condition. We therefore believe that insufficient and unpredictable funding of the Technical Cooperation Programme would have a negative impact on the promotional activities.

In that connection, we wish to recall a resolution of the Agency's General Conference, resolution GC(50)RES/12, which in its preamble states that the financing of technical cooperation should be in line with the concept of shared responsibility, under which there is a common engagement towards financing and enhancing the activities of the Agency.

The Angolan Government encourages all Member States to pay their contributions to the regular budget and the Technical Cooperation Fund in full and on time. The payment of extrabudgetary contributions for the financing of projects that are Board approved but for which no immediate funds are available for implementation should not be neglected. The Republic of Angola became a member of the IAEA eight years ago, and we are among the States which regularly pay their assessed contributions to the organization. The Angolan Government appreciates the assistance from which the country benefits within the framework of the IAEA's technical cooperation programme.

At present, the ongoing technical cooperation programme consists of nine projects dealing with the establishment of the first radiotherapy centre, introduction of nuclear medicine techniques to clinical practices, veterinary drug residue monitoring, isotope techniques to study the effect of bio and inorganic fertilizers, mutation breeding and the establishment of non-destructive testing laboratories for industrial applications.

Angola is also taking part in several regional and interregional projects included in the African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research (AFRA) programmes. In this context, we would like to underline the importance of the IAEA project on coastal zone management, which addresses the adverse effects of harmful algal blooms and in which Namibia and the Republic of South Africa are also participating.

In addition, the IAEA has provided assistance to my country in establishing the legal framework and regulatory infrastructure for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. On 28 June a national atomic energy law was promulgated as an important step towards the establishment of a national radiation protection institute, which will become a reality in the near future. In this regard, we wish to thank the IAEA for its valuable support.

For the 2009-2011 technical cooperation programming cycle, the Angolan Government has submitted for the IAEA's consideration six project concepts in the areas of nuclear physics, agriculture, human health, water resources, industrial applications and radiation protection. The projects involve the use of nuclear control systems, isotope hydrology for sustainable management of groundwater resources, sustaining national capability in maintenance and repair, improvement of beans through mutation breeding, the extension of a nuclear physics teaching laboratory to phase II and the strengthening of national capacity in medical physics. For considerations of efficiency, the IAEA organizes training courses, seminars, workshops, scientific visits and fellowships and provides expert advice and equipment.

My Government recognizes that the strengthening of the IAEA's technical cooperation activities relating to the peaceful use of atomic energy, and its practical applications, will substantially contribute to the well-being and quality of life of the peoples of the world, particularly those of developing member States.

However, we believe that for many developing countries, in particular Africa, the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger by 50 per cent by 2015, as foreseen by the United Nations, requires especially the eradication or control of cancer, tsetse flies and trypanosomiasis, HIV/AIDS, anopheles mosquitoes and malaria, and locusts, among other things. All these factors are additional hindrances to socio-economic development.

Global warming as a consequence of the atmospheric pollution resulting from human activity, which has been causing dramatic and dangerous climate changes, has become a serious threat to development and the security of humanity. We believe that as a first step to countering this scourge, all countries should sign and implement the international protocols relating to the protection of the environment, such as the Kyoto and Montreal Protocols. In this regard, my Government welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General in inviting the countries that are major polluters of the atmosphere to contribute to its protection more resources.

With regard to cancer, we appreciate the policy of seeking to develop a strategy for the implementation of the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT). We encourage the IAEA to proceed in its collaboration with other relevant national, regional and international organizations to foster the development of cost-effective systems for radiation treatment of cancer. In the same vein, we appeal to all member States to continue making contributions to PACT to enable the achievement of its goal, inter alia, to assist developing countries in integrating radiotherapy into the broader framework of cancer prevention and control. We also welcome the voluntary contributions of some member States, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development, the United States National Cancer Institute and private corporations.

Regarding the tsetse fly and the trypanosomiasis disease it transmits, my country supports the IAEA's activities aimed at the eradication or control of the tsetse fly through the use of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). We appreciate its continued support to African member States in their efforts to build national capabilities and further develop techniques for applying SIT in the creation of tsetse-free zones. We also appreciate the Agency's support for the African Union's Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign in its contribution to the implementation of plan of action in some countries on the continent.

Taking into account the progress achieved in the application of SIT in combating tsetse fly in some African countries, Angola wishes to encourage the IAEA, in partnership with other relevant organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, to further strengthen their research with a view to utilizing SIT in the control or eradication of the anopheles mosquito and malaria, locusts and other insects which hinder the socio-economic development of the continent. In the same context, we welcome the decision of the United Nations Regional Consultation on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, held in Algiers in July 2006, where methods and techniques for the integrated campaign against locusts were discussed and where recommendations emerged for the integration of nuclear applications in eliminating these insects and in establishing regional centres for studies and training in this field.

Last but not least, HIV/AIDS has been one of the most serious public health problems in modern history since its discovery in 1981. This disease is a far worse problem in some parts of the world than in others. Most people infected with AIDS live in the developing countries of Asia and Africa, while most of the deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. AIDS retards economic growth by destroying human capital and, consequently, increasing poverty.

In this context, we encourage the IAEA, in partnership with relevant national, regional and international organizations, to explore new possibilities to counter this ever-growing scourge. The Angolan Government notes with appreciation the regional project, Initiatives in HIV — molecular epidemiology and immunology, in support of the WHO/UNAIDS African AIDS Vaccine Programme.

With regard to nuclear verification, the nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regime continues to face a broad set of challenges. The Government of Angola is of the view that it is important to reinforce the monitoring of the application of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to move towards global disarmament. We appreciate all pertinent initiatives taken in compliance with United Nations Charter, according to the concept of multilateralism and the principles which govern relations between States. That means the equality of all States.

Angola, like the great majority of other members of the Assembly, recognizes the inalienable right of all States to produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In this context, my Government appreciates and supports the initiative to assist developing countries interested in small and medium-sized reactors, in order to address economic development while protecting the environment and ensuring safety and security.

The Angolan Government associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Benin on behalf of the African States.

To conclude, the Government of the Republic of Angola recommends the approval of the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency by the General Assembly.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): I wish to join previous speakers in thanking the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for his presentation to the Assembly of the annual report of the Agency for 2006.

Malaysia highly appreciates the IAEA's role in assisting developing Member States in planning for and in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes. However, more should be done to advance the inalienable rights of developing Member States, especially to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy, as well as the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material and technology for peaceful purposes, without discrimination and in conformity with their respective safeguards agreements, as enshrined under article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

With regard to cooperation concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Malaysia is one of those countries that has greatly benefited from the IAEA's Technical Assistance and Cooperation Programme. Initially a Programme recipient, Malaysia is now providing experts for IAEA missions to other developing countries under the Programme. In addition, we are an active supporter of the Programme, particularly in terms of hosting various IAEA conferences, seminars, workshops, meetings and regional training courses, as well as training Agency fellows. A substantial amount of the local organizational costs are absorbed by the Government of Malaysia. We do this because we see much value in the Programme, particularly for developing Member States, in developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Despite our commitment to the Programme, we are somewhat disappointed that at times we are unable to secure places for our scientists and engineers to be trained in the nuclear field in countries with more highly developed nuclear technology and programmes. This could be attributed to a tightened control regime by those countries on the transfer of nuclear and nuclear-related material, equipment and technologies.

While appreciating the concerns of those countries with more advanced nuclear sectors, Malaysia wishes to reaffirm that our intention in seeking to develop indigenous expertise in peaceful uses of nuclear technology, in line with our non-proliferation and safeguards commitments under the NPT, is with a view to further contributing to the Agency's Technical Assistance and Cooperation regime. Malaysia therefore urges the IAEA to look into this matter with a view to finding a way forward on the issue.

Having forsworn nuclear weapons, Malaysia is of the view that developing non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT deserve to be accorded preferential treatment in terms of access to nuclear equipment, material and technology for peaceful civilian uses over States not parties, whether through the IAEA Technical Assistance and Cooperation Programme or through bilateral arrangements.

We are now witnessing increased interest in nuclear energy as an alternative source of energy. Currently, among the developing countries, particularly in Asia, there is a strong interest in harnessing nuclear power for meeting future energy needs. As indicated in the IAEA report, 15 out of the 30 nuclear reactors currently being constructed in developing countries are located in Asia.

The three factors fuelling this interest, as identified by the Director-General in his statement to the fifty-first regular session of the IAEA General Conference, on 17 September 2007, are the steady growth in energy demand, the increasing concerns about energy security and the challenge of climate change. Malaysia shares that view. Currently, Malaysia depends on natural gas resources for over 70 per cent of its power generation. But, as a rapidly developing country, it will need to keep its future energy options open.

In this connection, Malaysia maintains a keen interest in any possible progress in the development of equitable multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. Malaysia is of the view that such arrangements regarding the nuclear fuel cycle would be beneficial to developing countries in the long term, especially in cases where those countries would need to eventually embark on a nuclear power programme to help meet future energy demands. In that context, Malaysia views any such multilateral approach as a means of minimizing the investment costs required for any country to embark on nuclear power generation to help meet its future energy demand, while also guaranteeing supplies.

Malaysia is also of the view that a temporary voluntary waiver of such rights as a precondition for participation in any such multilateral approach could be considered. We wish to emphasize, however, that the application of such a waiver should be effective only for the duration of the multilateral arrangement. Furthermore, such a waiver should also be paired with an assurance of continued supply to the relevant nuclear fuel cycle services and material, as well as with appropriate guarantees, including guaranteed financial and other relevant compensation for failure of supply for reasons other than violation or breach of nuclear non-proliferation commitments.

That notwithstanding, Malaysia also firmly believes that any multilateral approach to the nuclear fuel cycle should not adversely affect the fundamental inalienable rights of the NPT States parties to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, either by imposing a mandatory permanent suspension of any part of such rights as a precondition for participation by any NPT State Party in any such multilateral approach, or otherwise.

Notwithstanding Malaysia's support for moves towards improving the assurances of supply in the field of nuclear power generation technology, which in our view would significantly contribute towards reducing the risks of the further proliferation of sensitive technologies, such moves should also not distract global attention away from the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

Despite the overwhelming attention and emphasis placed on ensuring nuclear non-proliferation, Malaysia remains firmly convinced that the pursuit of general, complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control is the most effective way of removing the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation, and that the total elimination of such weapons remains the only guarantee against their use or the threat of their use.

In the context of pursuing the aim of total elimination of nuclear weapons, Malaysia remains concerned that a majority of the nuclear-weapon States have yet to conclude the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. In this regard, we welcome China's readiness to accede to the Protocol, and call upon the remaining nuclear-weapon States to consider acceding to the Protocol at the earliest opportunity. On a related note, we welcome the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia as the first such zone to be established in the Northern Hemisphere.

Malaysia also wishes to call for the prompt establishment of a similar nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), and relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. Malaysia also calls on Israel to accede to the NPT and promptly place all of its nuclear facilities under IAEA full-scope safeguards, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

On the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia reiterates its recognition of the IAEA as the sole competent authority for the verification of the safeguards obligations of that country as well of other member States. Malaysia believes that Iran's willingness to allow continuous IAEA inspection and verification of its nuclear facilities will help in gaining the trust and in building the confidence of the international community in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. In this regard, Malaysia welcomes the positive developments concerning Iran's cooperation with the IAEA and hopes that all outstanding questions over the Iranian nuclear programme can be resolved in an amicable and mutually agreeable manner.

Similarly, Malaysia welcomes the positive actions taken on the part of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, particularly its decision to shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facility and in allowing IAEA inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, pursuant to the 13 February agreement. Malaysia views such actions as significant confidence-building measures that could contribute towards efforts aimed at achieving the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Malaysia remains convinced of the value of the Six-Party Talks process, particularly in terms of reaching a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue, and we hope that all concerned parties will continue to remain committed to the process.

In conclusion, Malaysia would like to express once again its appreciation to Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, as well as to the IAEA secretariat for their significant and valuable work in upholding the three pillars of the Agency's mandate — namely, nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): At the outset, my delegation wishes to congratulate the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on its fiftieth anniversary this year and for its achievements, notably the progress made on the workplan with Iran and the monitoring, verification and disablement of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We strongly encourage and support Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue their cooperation with the IAEA in order to maintain the momentum of creating an environment conducive to peace and prosperity in the region.

Thailand also wishes to express its support for the broadening of the IAEA's mandate in promoting and regulating the peaceful uses of nuclear power for development. Thailand stands ready to work with the IAEA in improving nuclear safety and security towards the objective of nuclear non-proliferation through effective safeguards and verification measures. In this connection, we welcome the IAEA's five new members, and the 11 incoming members of the Agency's Board of Governors.

Thailand notes with satisfaction the IAEA's 2006 Annual Report, in particular the new initiatives and implementation of nuclear application programmes in various fields. In our view, nuclear technology applications constitute an area where the constructive role of the IAEA in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear power deserves more emphasis and active support.

As the fifty-eighth member of the IAEA and one of its founding members — since 1957 — and current member of the Board of Governors for the term 2006-2008, Thailand fully complies with the Agency's rules and regulations and with all relevant codes of conduct on the safety and security of radioactive sources. We welcome the keynote address by Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the IAEA's Director General, at the Sixth Congress on Science and Technology for Development in Thailand on 16 July 2007, where the role of nuclear power as an engine for development was underscored.

In particular, we fully support the view that the role of nuclear energy in relation to sustainable development needs to be re-evaluated in the context of emerging and interrelated issues — namely, energy security and climate change.

As a State party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Thailand recognizes and supports the inalienable right of all States to develop, research, produce and utilize nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, under the NPT. Acknowledging the symbiotic linkage between energy, security and development, and the exigencies of climate change resulting from the use of fossil fuels, Thailand considers nuclear power to be one of the sources of viable alternative energy options and therefore welcomes the reassessment of its role in sustainable development in accordance with both Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As there is a need to diversify energy sources and to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, Thailand looks to nuclear energy. In July of this year, Thailand announced its plan to develop nuclear energy under the National Power Development Plan for the next 14 years, in which nuclear-powered electricity generation is envisaged by 2021. The Office of Atoms for Peace of Thailand, as the national regulatory body, together with Thailand's Institute of Nuclear Technology and the National Energy Policy Council, as the operational and policymaking bodies, respectively, have already commenced work with the IAEA on issues relating to the necessary educational, industrial, legal, and institutional instruments. Thailand's Nuclear Power Infrastructure Preparatory Committee has also already been set up.

Thailand further welcomes the IAEA's active role in applying nuclear technology for other development purposes, especially in the fields of medicine, food and agriculture, environmental management and industry. Thailand thus encourages countries to work with the IAEA in reporting their progress in fulfilling international obligations regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy and in strengthening the implementation of safeguards systems.

The report, which outlines programmes and activities undertaken by the IAEA in conjunction with its member States, provides encouraging signs that the Agency is taking the right approach in supporting the rights of its members to utilize nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and in strengthening its legal and institutional role in safety and verification regimes.

With regard to strategies on non-proliferation issues, Thailand welcomes the IAEA's efforts to explore multilateral mechanisms to ensure reliable supply of and access to fuel cycle services for States that choose not to acquire full fuel cycle capabilities.

Regarding the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF), Thailand applauds the important role the TCF has been playing in strengthening technology transfer and promoting scientific and technological cooperation in areas such as basic human needs and sustainable development. Nevertheless, additional emphasis must be given to how the Fund could be used and managed more effectively without sacrificing the benefits of nuclear technology to Member States.

Finally, Thailand reiterates its support for the indispensable role of the IAEA in nuclear technology, safety and verification for the peace and prosperity of its member States and the international community. Thailand commends the IAEA for its integrity, impartiality and professionalism in promoting and ensuring the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for development, and hence its competence and central role as part of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

Mrs. Mladineo (Croatia): Croatia has aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore limit my remarks to a few issues of particular interest to my country.

At the outset, let me stress that, following last year's election to the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Governor from Croatia was elected Vice-Chairman of the Board this September. This result confirms our readiness to play a constructive part in IAEA activities. Moreover, it demonstrates Croatia's appreciation of the Agency's unique contribution to peace, security and development in the world at this difficult and critical time for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Let me also express Croatia's appreciation for the Agency's comprehensive annual report. I would like to thank the Director General, Mr. ElBaradei, for presenting the report this morning. Croatia fully supports its substance and is again pleased to be among the sponsors of the draft resolution on the report.

Croatia commends the Agency for the successful continuation of its wide-ranging activities in the fields of technology, safety and verification. We particularly support efforts to continuously upgrade and develop the Agency's concepts and means to effectively address dangerous new trends in nuclear proliferation.

The Agency was established 50 years ago to promote safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies. In this regard, Croatia reiterates that comprehensive safeguards agreements together with the Additional Protocols constitute the current IAEA verification standard. Achieving the universal application of a strengthened safeguards system is an urgent priority, and the fact that more than 100 countries have yet to bring into force their additional protocols is a cause of great concern. At the same time, there is a parallel need to increase the Agency's verification resources to enable it to deal effectively with growing verification demands.

Croatia supports the Agency's activities in the area of strengthening national capacities in order to prevent proliferation and increase nuclear security. National measures should include improvement of export and import controls, strengthening of border controls, re-evaluation of legislative frameworks, more frequent exchanges of relevant information at the national and international levels, and the improvement of public awareness on the issue of proliferation.

Croatia signed and ratified the Additional Protocol, the amendment to article VI of the IAEA statute and the amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Croatia also supports the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the supplementary guidance on the import and export of radioactive sources.

One of the most beneficial aspects of successful cooperation between Croatia and the Agency has been within the framework of its technical cooperation programme, where the Agency supports five ongoing projects in Croatia, together with its contributions to and co-organization of workshops and seminars hosted by Croatia, addressing issues of non-proliferation, radiation protection and the fight against trafficking and potential threats by terrorists against the security of nuclear and radioactive material.

In that context, we are also pleased to have strengthened our role in the region, bearing in mind the importance of coordinated and effective regional measures aimed at maximizing the peaceful use of nuclear energy and confronting the growing risks of proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

As the role of the Agency continues to expand, the challenges it faces remain important and difficult. The annual report makes it perfectly clear that these challenges can be addressed only by partnering with its stakeholders: member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, national counterparts and the public. Croatia pledges its unequivocal commitment to that partnership as we move along the path towards sustainable non-proliferation and genuine "atoms for peace".

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): This year, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. In its 50 years of existence, the Agency has acquired exclusive status as the leading international body capable of dealing with the question of the safe use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes and for ensuring effective control over the implementation of international obligations relating to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

States members of the Agency and its secretariat are doing truly colossal work. As part of its technical cooperation programme, the IAEA is providing interested member States with multifaceted assistance in making use of cutting-edge nuclear technology. Very careful work is being done to ensure a global system of nuclear and radiological security. An action plan to combat nuclear terrorism is being carried out. Measures are being taken to enhance the physical protection of nuclear and radioactive materials. Consistent steps are being taken to ensure the universalization of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to enhance the effectiveness of the IAEA safeguards system. Work is also being done to protect nuclear knowledge and train nuclear specialists.

Belarus has been actively promoting the implementation of all of these activities in the work of IAEA. Our country is fully behind the activities of the agency in its work towards achieving the IAEA slogan, "Atoms for peace". We believe that all of the machinery available in the Agency should be used to the maximum extent possible in order to achieve those aims. We consider the machinery for technical cooperation within IAEA today as the most important instrument for transmitting and implementing up-to-date nuclear ideas, technology and experience.

The implementation of technical cooperation projects by the Agency in Belarus have provided considerable assistance to national efforts in a number of areas relating to the possible use of nuclear know-how and technology. Moreover, Belarus suffered the full brunt of the Chernobyl tragedy, and the success of mutual assistance as part of its cooperation with IAEA has made it possible to implement a number of socio-economic and medical measures that have allowed for the rehabilitation of the damaged regions and have ensured their sustainable development.

At this stage of its existence, IAEA is particularly important in terms of cooperation with member States that are interested in setting up their own nuclear power programmes. We are pleased to note that IAEA activities along those lines are becoming more systematic in nature. That is particularly important given the increasing number of Governments that have announced their intentions to implement national programmes to develop nuclear power, including projects to construct nuclear power stations on their territory. In that context, a very promising area of work for the Agency is its evaluation of new approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle to ensure guaranteed supplies of nuclear fuel to interested consumers.

Belarus is a convinced and consistent supporter of enhancing and ensuring the universalization of the non-proliferation regime, and we have unfailingly discharged our obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the safeguards agreements. We are aware of the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the implementation of the NPT, but we nonetheless do believe that cooperation under that Treaty should lead to positive experiences in implementing all of its provisions, including the IAEA safeguards agreement.

In that connection, any country that discharges its obligations under the NPT should have unimpeded access to the development of its nuclear power.

The delegation of Belarus is pleased to note that the IAEA resolution on strengthening the Agency's activities in the field of technical cooperation reflects the value of the Agency's contribution to international efforts in overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The Government of Belarus intends to continue to create favourable conditions for the Agency in its work to mitigate the consequences of the catastrophe at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. We call on all member States of the Agency to support IAEA activities in that very important area.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to thank Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for presenting the annual report of the Agency. Pakistan appreciates the role played by IAEA in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the diverse areas of power generation, health and medicine, agriculture, hydrology, industry, environment and basic sciences. We assure Mr. ElBaradei and his colleagues of our full support and cooperation in achieving progress and prosperity for all.

IAEA has completed five decades working as a successful organization. Its role as the world's focal point in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy assumes greater significance in view of the rapidly growing global energy demand and shortage of fossil fuel reserves, as well as the diverse challenges of the environment and proliferation.

The Agency's report for 2006 underscores the key role of nuclear power in enhancing the security of energy supply while also mitigating the discharge of carbon into the atmosphere. The Agency can make a significant contribution to meeting the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century by ensuring equitable access to nuclear materials, technology and equipment for peaceful purposes.

Pakistan attaches the highest importance to the technical cooperation programme of the IAEA. We have benefited from and contributed to the technical cooperation programme.

Pakistan was one of the earliest countries to launch a programme of nuclear power generation and have developed the entire range of nuclear fuel cycle facilities. Parallel to the development of the nuclear fuel cycle, I would briefly draw attention to our achievements in other sectors.

In the area of nuclear research, the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology has emerged as a major research institution in the region for basic and applied research in the fields of nuclear physics, nuclear chemistry, nuclear materials, nuclear engineering, radioisotope production and applications.

The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission is playing a vital role in the application of nuclear science and technology in the human health sector. The Commission has so far established 13 nuclear medicine and oncology centres and institutions throughout the country for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. The PAEC is also collaborating with international agencies such as the IAEA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the International Union Against Cancer, the World Health Organization and others in technical cooperation projects, providing training for technical human resource development.

The PAEC has been playing a major role in harnessing nuclear techniques in agriculture and other biological research since its inception. Our National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering is a centre dedicated to the application of biotechnology in agriculture, industry, health and environment. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission has also established research laboratories in the fields of isotope hydrology and isotope ecology.

With a sizeable civilian nuclear programme and decades of experience in nuclear operations in the areas of power generation, health, medicine, agriculture, biotechnology and industrial applications, Pakistan is uniquely placed to offer cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy to developing countries under IAEA safeguards. We look forward to further strengthening our participation in the IAEA's promotional activities.

Since the foundation of the atomic energy programme, Pakistan has always recognized that nuclear safety and security in the national and international context is a vital objective. We have therefore established strong safety and security infrastructure, including a strong and independent Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA). Pakistan is a party to the Nuclear Safety Convention, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and other relevant IAEA instruments. Nuclear safety arrangements at civilian facilities in Pakistan are subjected to peer reviews and regular inspections by IAEA missions. On the security side, the PNRA requires all operators to implement the security arrangements as contained in IAEA document INFCIRC/225/Rev.4, which constitutes the current international standard in this regard.

The PNRA is implementing a National Nuclear Security Action Plan which aims at, first, strengthening the security of nuclear and radioactive materials and facilities containing such materials; secondly, prevention and detection of illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials; and, thirdly, responding to incidents of illicit trafficking and emergencies. The PNRA is cooperating with the IAEA for capacity-building in this context.

Pakistan's economy has expanded at an average annual growth rate of 7 per cent from 2002 to 2007. Electricity demand increased at 8 per cent per annum. At the current rate of growth, the demand for electricity would increase from 20,000 megawatts at present to 163,000 megawatts by 2030.

Pakistan's indigenous energy resources are limited. The Government of Pakistan has therefore launched a 25-year Energy Security Plan to cater for the rising demand for energy. The strategy for the development of the power sector is maximum utilization of indigenous energy resources to reduce dependence on imported fuels. Nuclear power generation will be an indispensable element in our national energy security strategy.

This Energy Security Plan envisages increase in nuclear power generation capacity from the present 425 megawatts to 8,800 megawatts by the year 2030, representing an increase in the proportion of energy that nuclear electricity generation will supply from the 0.8 per cent to 4.2 per cent. This will entail setting up several additional nuclear power reactors.

To support the planned expansion of nuclear power in Pakistan, we have embarked upon the establishment of a uranium conversion and enrichment facility that will cater for the needs for fuel of our nuclear power plants. At the last IAEA General Conference, Pakistan made an announcement concerning the possibility of placing this facility under IAEA safeguards. This voluntary measure would be facilitated through Pakistan's non-discriminatory integration into the international arrangements for peaceful nuclear cooperation.

Pakistan has been closely following recent proposals and initiatives on assurances of supply of nuclear fuel. The basis of acceptance of any such mechanism will be that of trust in the system. It should encourage expansion of nuclear power through the assured supply of nuclear fuel and other related services in a non-discriminatory manner. Above all, consistent with the existing realities, any such mechanism should include all States with advanced fuel cycle capabilities, without discrimination. In particular, the report of the Expert Group established by the Director General of the IAEA emphasizes the need to make the three non-NPT States partners of the multilateral nuclear fuel cycle approach. It also envisages the establishment of nuclear parks in countries under IAEA supervision.

Pakistan recognizes the important role played by the IAEA verification regime. We have fully complied with our obligations pursuant to our safeguards agreements with the IAEA. We share the view that all States should fully comply with their safeguards obligations and international commitments. The most important step towards maintaining the credibility of the safeguards regime is the fulfilment of their legal obligations by all States. A balance between the Agency's regulatory, promotional and safety functions will ensure the continuing relevance of the Agency in the twenty-first century in the context of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy as well as non-proliferation.

In conclusion, let me say that the international community has well recognized and commended the vital role that Director General ElBaradei and the IAEA are playing in the promotion of peaceful nuclear cooperation and non-proliferation. Mr. ElBaradei's remarks regarding several current issues deserve close consideration by all the concerned parties.

There is a disconnect, however, between the call of some for full-scope safeguards and the additional protocol as the standard for peaceful nuclear cooperation, and their simultaneous readiness to consider selective exceptions from such standards. Pakistan supports the Director General's call for a new framework for the use of nuclear energy that responds to "the lessons we have learned and the current reality" (A/62/PV.36). And this will have to be done on a non-discriminatory basis. We also welcome the recognition of the linkage between non-proliferation and disarmament. For its part, for the past several years, Pakistan has called for evolving a new consensus on disarmament and non-proliferation which would encompass the new framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We hope that the Secretary-General will consider convening an international conference or a special session of the General Assembly to help in evolving such a new consensus.

Ms. Mohamed-Noor (Singapore): My delegation would first like to thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for his comprehensive report. The IAEA continues to do excellent work, despite the challenges it faces. That is testimony to the skill and leadership of its Director General. We believe that the IAEA should continue to be the global focal point for nuclear cooperation, in line with its three pillars of technology, safety and security and verification.

Last year, we were focused on nuclear developments in Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This year, we welcome the closure of the Yongbyon nuclear facility in the latter country, as verified by the IAEA, and the return of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Six-Party Talks. Continuing cooperation between the IAEA and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will lead to enhanced security in the Korean peninsula. In tandem, we hope that Iran will also continue to cooperate with the IAEA in building confidence and resolving the outstanding questions pertaining to its nuclear programme.

The Asia-Pacific region's demand for energy has increased with its rapid economic development. This demand can only become more pronounced in the future. At present, fossil fuels meet most of Asia's energy needs. The question going forward is whether this situation can continue. Fossil fuels are finite and not always easy to extract; high oil prices are one manifestation of this. There are also concerns about the pollutive effects of fossil fuels and how fossil fuel emissions contribute to climate change. With these concerns in mind, it is no surprise that many countries are exploring alternative sources of energy that may be cleaner and more stable in terms of price and long-term availability. In short, many countries are looking at nuclear power.

Under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), States have the sovereign right to use nuclear energy for peaceful means. However, countries that explore the nuclear energy option also have a grave responsibility to carefully consider safety issues. Accidents involving nuclear facilities have horrible effects that range over great distances and manifest themselves over a very lengthy period of time. One need only hark back to the Chernobyl tragedy of more than 20 years ago. Just this year, there was a fire and a leak at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant when an earthquake struck Niigata province in Japan.

States newly considering nuclear power should also adopt measures to assuage concerns about safety and security issues. The IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security has a pivotal role to play in helping these countries achieve the necessary safety standards. The IAEA can help States build capacity regarding safety and security issues associated with the use of nuclear energy. We fully support the Department's objective of a strong, sustainable and visible global safety regime that provides for the protection of people and the environment from the effects of ionizing radiation, for the minimization of the likelihood of accidents or malicious acts that could endanger life and property and for the effective mitigation of the effects of any such incidents. In this regard, we welcome the IAEA's activities to build, strengthen and maintain national and regional capacities for using nuclear technology in a safe, secure and sustainable manner, and we encourage the IAEA to continue these activities.

The IAEA should also continue its technical cooperation with relevant countries and explore more partnerships and cooperation with other players in the nuclear energy market. States should draw on the IAEA's expertise in these areas.

Singapore supports the IAEA's objective of providing authoritative guidance and advice on nuclear safety approaches, policies and principles. To this end, IAEA's safety standards are of paramount importance and provide a widely accepted basis for nuclear safety. States considering nuclear power should look towards these international standards in setting their own guidelines and should build on the IAEA's framework when developing nuclear safety regimes. Singapore thus welcomes the IAEA's efforts to extend its safety and security standards and best practices throughout the world.

We support the introduction of a new IAEA safety review initiative, the Integrated Regulatory Review Service, the adoption of the Fundamental Safety Principles by the IAEA Board of Governors, and the continuation of the IAEA's peer review mechanism. These initiatives will help countries and regional organizations build up a body of standards, knowledge and expertise on nuclear safety issues.

Importantly, the effectiveness of the IAEA necessarily depends in large part on cooperation from States. States should continue to work, in cooperation with the IAEA, on creating a culture of safety among nuclear regulators, operators and employees. Regional safety and security regimes under the auspices of the IAEA, such as the Asian Nuclear Safety Network, are useful in building up State capacity based on the IAEA's safety protocols and standards.

Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), we also recognize the IAEA's role and expertise in the area of safety. The plan of action that was adopted by ASEAN Foreign Ministers in July to implement the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, for instance, calls for ASEAN to work with the IAEA and other partners in developing a legal framework to meet international standards on nuclear safety. ASEAN energy ministers, at their annual meeting in Singapore on 23 August 2007, also endorsed in principle the establishment of a nuclear energy safety subsector network to discuss nuclear safety issues.

These developments go hand in hand with efforts to look for alternative, carbon-free and sustainable energy sources. In this regard, ASEAN looks forward to working closely with the IAEA in developing a regional framework of collaboration and cooperation, as well as adopting the best practices in this field. We believe this is timely, as more South-East Asian countries have either indicated an interest in or are pursuing nuclear energy programmes, in line with increasing energy needs. We believe that, for their part, companies involved in the provision of nuclear energy plants must also help ensure that nuclear power plants meet the highest safety standards. This includes issues such as location and design, the management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and human capacity to run the plants properly.

The IAEA's role in building confidence about the safety and security aspects of nuclear energy is crucial. Nuclear energy is obviously an option for States considering alternative sources of energy. But those same States must ensure that this energy can be sourced safely. Cooperation with the IAEA in developing their nuclear power is essential for those States' — and, indeed, the wider regions' — safety and security. It would be tragic if nuclear energy became the source of future problems. Singapore believes that the IAEA can continue to do good work in this regard.

Singapore will continue to support the IAEA's mission and activities in the future.

Mr. Kryzhanivskyi (Ukraine): Ukraine has aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union (EU) and associated countries. Therefore, I shall limit my remarks to a few issues of particular importance to my country.

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of Ukraine, I would like to congratulate the new States members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — the Republic of Cape Verde, the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Burundi, the Kingdom of Bahrain and Nepal — and to wish them every success in their activities within the Agency. The enlargement of the IAEA's membership is additional evidence of the Agency's growing authority.

As is known, Ukraine voluntarily renounced what was then the world's third largest nuclear weapons arsenal. That is further evidence that we are a country for which the peaceful use of nuclear energy is one of the fundamental principles of sustainable development for all nations seeking a more secure and predictable environment.

We share the view that it is necessary to expand the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in a safe and secure manner, with reduced risk of proliferation. That is the idea behind the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, which we joined on 16 September 2007 by signing its Statement of Principles.

Regarding the Agency's activity in evaluating the worldwide long-term use of nuclear energy, my country attaches special importance to the IAEA's work in studying the options for meeting energy demands. We note and value the initiative of the Agency on the creation of a non-discriminatory mechanism of nuclear fuel supply. We believe that a guaranteed nuclear fuel supply, in conformity with the principle of nuclear non-proliferation and under the Agency's auspices, will be essential in improving the energy independence and security of Member States, especially developing ones.

Since my country suffered the world's worst nuclear accident, at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, we pay special attention to compliance with effective safety standards and to ensuring that these are in accordance with internationally recognized norms. Safety performance indicators at Ukrainian nuclear power plants meet the requirements of national and international norms in this sphere, which was confirmed by Operational Safety Review Team missions to Ukrainian nuclear power plants. Nevertheless, my country continues to upgrade its approaches to nuclear power plant safety improvement. We do this at the national level and in the framework of international cooperation. We also update legislation in the field of nuclear energy use, and we strengthen relevant institutional capabilities of the national regulatory authority.

It is my pleasure to note that the enhancement of nuclear security, the improvement of nuclear materials and the security of radioactive sources worldwide remain among the Agency's priorities. My country attaches special importance to activity aimed at supporting the Illicit Trafficking Database because it gives an opportunity to assess trends in this sphere for further improvement, development and implementation of measures aimed at securing the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We have actively participated in that programme since 1997, and we call upon all Member States to engage more actively in exchanges of information with the Database.

My country considers the Comprehensive Safeguards System as an important tool to ensure the absence of undeclared activities and of the diversion of related nuclear materials. We are confident that the safeguards agreements, together with additional protocols, should constitute the IAEA verification standard. Ukraine encourages all States that still have not done so to sign, ratify and implement comprehensive safeguards agreements without further delay.

My country fulfils its international obligations in accordance with the provisions of the Additional Protocol on safeguards between Ukraine and the IAEA. I would like to take this opportunity to once again express our gratitude to the Agency for its assistance in implementing the Additional Protocol in Ukraine.

We reaffirm our position that achievement of the universality of the safeguards system must be considered a priority task by the Agency. The IAEA must devote special attention to safeguards implementation in countries striving to develop nuclear activities.

It is well known that the issues of the mitigation of consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the transformation of the shelter object at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant into an environmentally sound system remain among the priorities for Ukraine.

I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that in September the contracts in the construction of a new safe confinement over the shelter and of an interim spent fuel storage facility for the Chernobyl site were signed in Kyiv. We appreciate highly the efforts of all the countries involved, contributors and donors to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund and the Nuclear Safety Account of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for their valuable contributions that made the conclusion of those contracts possible. We are convinced that the implementation of the contracts will be crucial for overcoming the consequences of Chernobyl, and we call upon all parties concerned to further foster this process.

Ukraine welcomes the long-standing partnership with the IAEA in the implementation of radiological support for the rehabilitation of the Chernobyl-affected areas. We particularly welcome the efforts of the Agency to enhance the radiation safety of the local communities in the Chernobyl area, to improve the long-term strategy of radiological monitoring and to disseminate information.

During this General Assembly session, we will submit a draft resolution on the strengthening of international cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. We shall look forward to its adoption by consensus next month. In the spirit of solidarity, we kindly invite other Member States to join in sponsoring that document.

Ukraine shares the concerns regarding new threats of nuclear terrorism. Therefore, we welcome the development of effective measures aimed at preventing the acquisition by terrorists of nuclear and radiological weapons and the means of their delivery in the framework of initiatives on the suppression of nuclear terrorism, as well as other international and regional programmes in this field. At this point, we note with satisfaction the entry into force in July 2007 of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

In conclusion, I would like to echo the words of support expressed earlier regarding the report of the IAEA, and to note again our appreciation for the activities of the IAEA Director General, Mr. ElBaradei, as well as for those of the Agency's secretariat, in strengthening international cooperation in the sphere of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Ukraine will continue to participate actively in the Agency's activities in order to help to fulfil this important mission.

Ukraine fully supports the draft resolution entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency" (A/62/L.5).

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to join other delegations in thanking Director General Mohamed ElBaradei for his presentation of the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

As a member of the IAEA, Kazakhstan takes effective measures to meet its obligations in strengthening the non-proliferation regime, as well as in implementing the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement. By renouncing our possession of the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal, we again confirmed our country's devotion to implementing its international obligations. We have established and are consistently improving a system to combat the illicit transfer of nuclear material and technology. At the same time, we call for careful reflection on the introduction of new limits to the transfer of nuclear technologies so as not to create unjustified barriers to the peaceful use of nuclear power.

We in Kazakhstan are working, with IAEA assistance, to implement the provisions of the new version of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

In the town of Kurchatov, we have started work on a nuclear technology park, which will be a basis for the development of peaceful applications of nuclear power, including the development of nuclear power in our country. We have begun operating a heavy ion accelerator and are continuing the construction of a Kazakh research tokomak. We are also designing a major nuclear medicine centre.

Kazakhstan has the second largest uranium deposits in the world, and we clearly understand the importance and responsibility of not using uranium for any purposes other than peaceful ones. This year, Kazakhstan signed an intergovernmental agreement with Russia on the creation of an international uranium enrichment centre in Angarsk. My colleague, the representative of the Russian Federation, alluded to this earlier today (see A/62/PV.36). We believe that the creation of a multinational centre for uranium enrichment would make it possible to ensure reliable uranium fuel, while at the same time deferring the proliferation of sensitive technology from the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. We are an active participant in the process of strengthening the non-proliferation regime, both worldwide and in the Central Asian region.

Kazakhstan recognizes the right of each country to develop peaceful nuclear technology. We must find ways to resolve the conflict situations that have arisen recently. These ways should not infringe on the right of countries to technological development or their access to knowledge and should restore the confidence of the international community with regard to peaceful nuclear activity. This is certainly a very complex task, but the experience of the IAEA and of its Director General with his firm and principled position makes it possible for us to hope for a successful resolution to this problem.

We need to improve the monitoring system regarding a whole range of problems relating to nuclear weapons and technology while at the same time ensuring that the nuclear atom is used for exclusively peaceful purposes, not for military purposes. We feel that it is logical to create, under the auspices of the IAEA, mechanisms, including international centres, to ensure a reliable fuel supply for nuclear power stations and to manage the secure storage and reprocessing of waste at particularly sensitive stages of the fuel cycle.

It is clear that we will need to resolve political, commercial and financial questions to do this and it is possible that such proposals may seem somewhat unrealistic today, but I think we have to start moving along these lines. We do support the IAEA report and note the statement made today by the Director General and his initiative for new approaches to the peaceful use of nuclear power. We believe that, once they have been thoroughly discussed, we could agree on general guidelines for developing innovative nuclear technology.

In conclusion, we would like to express again our firm support for the activities of the IAEA, and we assure you that Kazakhstan will continue to consistently live up to its reputation as a responsible international partner in this area. As is our custom, Kazakhstan is one of the sponsors of the resolution to be adopted today by the General Assembly on the IAEA.

Mr. Abdallah (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and wish him every success in his lofty post. We would also like to express our appreciation and thanks to Mr. ElBaradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his comprehensive report to the General Assembly. This report reviews the action and plans of the IAEA with regard to the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes, the preservation of the international nuclear security regime and the strengthening of the security of nuclear installations. This stresses the growing role of the IAEA, particularly in the area of cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and for development.

My delegation welcomes the draft resolution presented by Chile on the report of the IAEA for 2006. We support this draft resolution, in conformity with the African Group's position as expressed to the General Assembly by the representative of Benin. On behalf of the delegation of Sudan, it is a great pleasure to welcome the representative of Chile and to congratulate him on his election as Head of the Board of Governors. We highly appreciate the efforts of the IAEA in the area of cooperation with various scientific bodies to improve agricultural crops and their characteristics, as well as to develop vaccines, a nuclear medicine programme, particularly in medicines used in the fight against cancer, one of the deadliest diseases of our time.

My delegation reaffirms the right of States, without any discrimination, to undertake research and produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with international conventions. We call on States to preserve the credibility of the IAEA and its vital role by refraining from exerting pressure on the Agency or from interfering with its activities. In this context, we ask that justice and equity be respected in dealing with certain States, through dialogue and negotiations, so as to come to suitable solutions in accordance with international agreements.

The delegation of the Sudan reaffirms its established position to support the aspirations of all geographical regions to make their regions free from nuclear weapons, on the basis of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which is one of the main pillars of international peace and security. The Middle East region is still a long way away from achieving this goal. For decades now, Israel, the only State in the region to possess nuclear weapons, is opposed to such initiatives and refuses to sign the NPT and its Additional Protocol, despite the appeals and repeated calls of the international community to that effect. Israel's accession to the Treaty and its Protocol is the only way to put an end to tensions in the region and to open the path to peace for everyone. Declaring the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone remains the best way to reinforce regional security and to maintain international peace.

Helping developing countries to develop their national legislation will complete the work of the IAEA in implementing the programmes and plans for technical cooperation. We hope that cooperation will be promoted within the framework of the Agency's health programmes in order to activate and support regional and continental projects in the fight against mosquitoes that transmit malaria, the disease that kills most people in Africa, so that our continent can implement its economic and social development programmes. We highly appreciate the work of the IAEA on the African continent and we hope that the Agency's budget will be increased so that it can fight poverty and diseases and support nuclear treatment institutions, on the African continent.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/62/L.5, but before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to ten minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Hong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is, in essence, an issue directly linked to the end of the hostile policy of the United States and its nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. A peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations is our consistent policy. This is well proved by our efforts dedicated to the hard process of resolving the issue since the early 1990s. Our ultimate goal, with regard to the nuclear issue, is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The 19 September 2005 Joint Statement and the practical actions taken for its implementation thus far are a clear indication of the unwavering political will of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to implement faithfully its obligations pursuant to the 19 September Joint Statement on the basis of the principle of actions for actions. That requires the United States to take political measures such as removing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the list of States sponsors of terrorism and terminating the obligations of the Trading with the Enemy Act, as they have pledged to do.

In particular, Japan should do positive things to achieve progress in the ongoing Six-Party Talks, not merely in words but in actions. Japan's call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006) is nothing but a manifestation of their ulterior intentions to block current progress. No issues will be resolved by sanctions or pressure, as has been proven by history.

As for the draft resolution before us, with strong reservations on some paragraphs contained in IAEA General Conference resolution GC(51)/RES/16, my delegation wishes to inform the Assembly that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to join in the consensus adoption of draft resolution A/62/L.5, entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency", with the expectation of continued progress in the six-party talks and a fair approach by the Agency to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position before the Assembly takes a decision on the draft resolution.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.5. I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of the text: Belize, Botswana, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Morocco and Tunisia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.5?

It was so decided.

Draft resolution A/62/L.5 was adopted (resolution 62/2).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Darwish (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our delegation joined the consensus on the draft resolution entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency" (A/62/L.5), guided by its belief in the importance of the role of the Agency in monitoring nuclear non-proliferation and guaranteeing the right of all Member States, big and small alike, to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

However, our delegation wishes to place on record our disappointment and regret over the double standards exhibited by several States in the various successive conferences of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the issue of Israeli nuclear capabilities and the Israeli nuclear threat. That has resulted in the annual postponement of the discussion of this question, while major international pressure is being brought to bear on other States as they exercise their sovereign right to possess nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In that regard, we recall that this item has remained on the agenda of the IAEA General Conference for over a decade, during which time many resolutions emerged in favour of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone and calling upon Israel to abandon the nuclear option, to subject its nuclear facilities to international inspection and to the safeguards agreement, along with the other States in the region, and to strive to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone that has no place for the policies of nuclear terrorism.

We should also mention that we were also disappointed with the failure of the international community to send a clear message to Israel, in which it affirms the importance of good intentions and serious work to implement the principle of nuclear non-proliferation in an equitable and transparent manner, instead of the policy of nuclear hypocrisy practiced by some States which will only lead to greater threats to international peace and security.

Our delegation would like to emphasize that continuous manoeuvring to silence the voice of the truth vis-à-vis the Israeli nuclear threat and danger to the Middle East will lead to frustration on the part of the States and peoples of the region and will cause a nuclear arms race, the results of which will be the responsibility of the States that are covering up the danger posed by Israeli nuclear weapons.

The annual vote which is usually held in the First Committee on the draft resolution entitled "Threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" is clear evidence of the unsound position of those States that have mounted obstacles to the discussion of this item at previous IAEA General Conferences. That is especially true since the seventh preambular paragraph of this year's First Committee draft resolution (A/C.1/62/L.2) refers to concerns about the continued presence of nuclear facilities in the Middle East that are not subject to the safeguards regime. The eighth preambular paragraph of the same draft also notes that Israel remains the only State in the Middle East that is not yet a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Also, operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of the First Committee's draft resolution emphasize the importance of Israel joining, without any delay, the NPT, and having all its nuclear facilities subjected to comprehensive IAEA safeguards. Israel is urged not to develop, produce, test or possess nuclear weapons, but to abandon the possession of such weapons as an important confidence-building measure among all States in the region and a step towards promoting peace and security.

All those demands represent the international and regional will to protect international and regional peace and security from the threat of Israeli nuclear arms.

The Acting President: We have now heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 87?

It was so decided.

Organization of work

The Acting President: I would like to draw to the attention of members that a revised programme of work of the General Assembly has been re-issued as document A/INF/62/4/Rev.1, for technical reasons.

Further to the announcement made at the 33rd plenary meeting, on 24 October 2007, concerning the programme of work, the following changes are reflected in the revised version: the postponement to a later date of the consideration of agenda item 11, "Elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion"; agenda item 14, "Prevention of armed conflict"; and agenda item 44, "Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS." The specific meeting focused on developments under agenda item 116, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", is now scheduled for Thursday afternoon, 6 December 2007.

Additionally, I wish to inform members that on Wednesday afternoon, 31 October 2007, as the second item, the General Assembly will take up sub-item (b) of agenda item 66, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children", for the purpose of taking action on a draft decision submitted by the President of the General Assembly. The draft decision is entitled "Participation of children and non-governmental organizations in the round tables of the Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children". This will be issued under the symbol A/62/L.8.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.

United Nations
A/62/PV.38

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting

Thursday, 30 October 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim .... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 21

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/92 and A/62/92/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.1)

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under the agenda item entitled, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China at the second South Summit, held in Qatar in June 2005, condemned the use of economic coercive measures designed to prevent countries from exercising their right to decide their own political, economic and social systems and called on all countries not to recognize unilateral extraterritorial laws that impose sanctions on other States and foreign companies. The heads of State and Government also recognized that the embargo had caused a high degree of economic and financial damage and had negatively impacted on the welfare and well-being of the people of Cuba. They called upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the embargo.

More recently, at the thirty-first Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 and China, held in New York on 27 September 2007, the Ministers once again firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries. The ministers reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. They therefore called on the international community to neither recognize those measures nor apply them. The G-77 and China stands firm in rejecting unilateral measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries.

The G-77 and China is committed to working towards a better world for all in which nations large or small can coexist peacefully. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires an adherence by all nations to the rule of law, including international law.

In conformity with the fundamental norms of international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States, the G-77 and China supports the need to eliminate coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The Group of 77 and China believes that the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba violates the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in other States' domestic affairs, as well as international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.

We believe that the replacement of the embargo with greater dialogue and cooperation will contribute greatly not only towards the removal of tensions, but also towards promoting meaningful exchange and partnership between countries whose destinies are linked by history and geography.

Considering the impact that the embargo has had on the everyday life of the Cuban people, the overwhelming majority of Member States are here today in support of the resolution on the necessity of ending the embargo. The G-77 and China will again support the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) before us today and would urge all Member States to do so as well.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the honour to speak regarding agenda item 21 on behalf of the 118 United Nations Member States that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Movement renews its commitment to defend, preserve and promote the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We oppose unilateralism and unilaterally imposed measures by States in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. NAM rejects the adoption and implementation of extraterritorial or unilateral coercive measures or legislation, including unilateral economic sanctions, other intimidating measures and arbitrary travel restrictions, that seek to exert pressure on non-aligned countries; threaten their sovereignty, independence and freedom of trade and investment; and prevent them from exercising their right to decide, of their own free will, their own political, economic and social systems.

Those measures, laws and regulations constitute flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the multilateral trading system and the norms and principles governing friendly relations among States. In this context, we are committed to persevere with effective efforts to reverse them and urge other States to do likewise, as called for by the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. NAM requests that States applying those measures or laws revoke them fully and immediately.

As reaffirmed by the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at their Summit Conference held in Havana in September 2006, we call once again upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness, is causing huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

NAM reiterates its deep concern over the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo against Cuba and rejects the reinforcement of the measures adopted by the United States Government aimed at tightening the embargo, as well as all other recent measures carried out by the Government of the United States against the people of Cuba.

In conclusion, the Non-Aligned Movement again urges strict compliance with resolutions 47/19, 48/16, 49/9, 50/10, 51/17, 52/10, 53/4, 54/21, 55/20, 56/9, 57/11, 58/7, 59/11, 60/12 and 61/11 of the United Nations General Assembly, all related to the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be now closed.

It was so decided.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitzenibez, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, the Bahamas.

Let me begin by stating that CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The situation affecting the Caribbean member State of Cuba continues to be of significant concern to the Caribbean Community in the context of nporary international relations. CARICOM has s recognized the importance of productive and lly beneficial relations among the countries of der Caribbean, whose shores are washed by the ean Sea and which must face the challenges to ization from a unified perspective. Thus Cuba, as r Caribbean State, faces certain obstacles that ue to be of great concern to our wider region. At cond meeting of CARICOM-Cuba on 29 May in incent and the Grenadines, the Ministers for n Affairs, in the communiqué issuing therefrom, ted:

> "their firm commitment to the purpose and rinciples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, multilateralism and the fundamental rinciples of international law, including respect for sovereignty and the juridical equality of States, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the prohibition of threats or the use of force in international relations, respect for erritorial integrity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the sovereign rights of the citizens of every country to freely determine its system and political institutions in conditions of peace, stability and justice."

principles continue to constitute core elements conduct of CARICOM international relations.

In that regard, we read with great interest the of the Secretary-General, which outlines the responses from an overwhelming majority of er States, who also share and uphold those ples as they relate to the unilateral embargo t Cuba. CARICOM reiterates its complete ition to the punitive embargo, which has gone on r too long. We maintain our opposition to the ition of extraterritorial laws on third States, is contrary to the Charter and has no place in nporary international relations.

The significant impact of the embargo on the economy continues to be of great concern to COM, and the humanitarian impact on the people ba, especially in the area of health care and food, eed saddening. The inability of Cuba to acquire al equipment, spare parts and latest-generation ations because of the embargo continues to affect Cuban health-care system, where treatment heless remains free of charge to the Cuban e.

Cuba, as the most populous State of the Caribbean region, is an integral part of our pan-Caribbean process. CARICOM links with Cuba remain strong and are continually expanding. On 8 December 2006, the Chairman of the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government, Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of Saint Kitts and Nevis, recounted the historical links between Cuba and CARICOM States on the occasion of the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and CARICOM. On that day, in 1972, the four independent Caribbean States of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago expressed their strong commitment to the concept of the oneness of the Caribbean. Since that time, the relationship has been one of solidarity and fraternity and has become stronger and deeper through cooperation in the political, economic and social domains.

Prime Minister Douglas also expressed the deep appreciation of CARICOM for the technical and other forms of assistance that Cuba continues to provide to the Caribbean, particularly to the young people of our region as they seek to develop their professional skills and contribute to the building of our nations and, collectively, to the Caribbean community.

The Prime Minister went on to acknowledge that almost 3,000 CARICOM students are currently studying in Cuba, a large number of whom are beneficiaries of scholarships in disciplines ranging from medicine, engineering and telecommunications to architecture, computer sciences, geology and others. Cuban scholarships to the non-self-governing Territories of the Caribbean must also be recognized and applauded.

It is no small feat that Cuban assistance in the field of health throughout much of the globe continues to be considerable, even as the impact of the embargo is systematically tightened. Cuban doctors continue to serve throughout the developing world, where health-care needs are often acute and greatly underserviced. In the Caribbean alone, Cuba has built hospitals and clinics, provided medicines and furnished doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals. Cuban support for the restoration of the sight of many of our people will always be remembered with utmost appreciation and gratitude.

The meeting of CARICOM/Cuba ministers for foreign affairs last May identified additional areas of cooperation, including the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, cooperation on the impact of climate change between the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre and the Cuban Institute of Meteorology, and the sustainable use of natural resources, among others. We in CARICOM are looking forward to further cooperation with Cuba on all of those matters.

Through its actions, Cuba has shown that it is an integral part of the Caribbean. It has not threatened any Member State, but rather has consistently sought to assist its neighbours in their ongoing quest for sustainable human development. CARICOM reiterates its unwavering support for the right of the Cuban people, and all people, to self-determination, as clearly stated in the Charter of the United Nations.

The embargo imposed against Cuba is an anachronism and serves no useful purpose in this twenty-first century, where our planet is faced with the formidable challenge of an impending Earth crisis as a result of climate change. While small island States in the Caribbean and Pacific provide early warning of imminent climactic disaster, large areas of the African continent are now suffering through drought on the one hand and disastrous floods on the other. Economic inequality continues to persist and worsen. We must exert all the energies of the international community to face and resolve those formidable challenges.

CARICOM enjoys friendly relations with both Cuba and the United States. Those two great nations have produced great scholars, scientists and global leaders. We call for a new beginning between the Governments and peoples of those two great nations, one large, one small. As with similar initiatives undertaken for negotiations on far more difficult issues of international relations, we can only imagine the resounding positive effect for the international community of such a rapprochement, based on the fundamental principle of the self-determination of peoples.

It is within that context that CARICOM States support the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/62/L.1). The time has long passed for us to move on and to tackle the real challenges facing humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Valero, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America against Cuba constitutes a genocidal and unilateral act of criminal force, which flagrantly violates the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically rejects the application of laws or regulatory provisions with extraterritorial effect that violate the sovereignty of States and intervene in their internal affairs. The embargo against Cuba is an anachronism of failed imperial policies and is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the peoples and Governments of the world. The United Nations has repeatedly rejected the embargo and the forces of North American imperialism have repeatedly disregarded that appeal by the international community.

A few days ago, President George W. Bush threatened to intensify the ferocity of the embargo against Cuba, urged further isolation of that heroic brotherly country and called for the undermining of the institutions of the Cuban State. That represents a new attempt to destroy the revolution and reconquer Cuba, and it is now being implemented. The Bolivarian revolution completely rejects those irrational endeavours and urges all Governments and peoples of the world to oppose such imperial arrogance.

The inhuman measures imposed by the Government of United States of America for more than 45 years have had a terrible economic and social impact on the sister Republic of Cuba, in refusing to recognize the norms that govern economic, commercial and financial relations among States. The Government and the people of Cuba have responded with honour and dignity to this criminal aggression. Despite the embargo, Cuba maintains its cooperation and solidarity with the peoples of the South, in particular with regard to programmes in education and health care. Venezuela appreciates the solidarity of the Cuban people and of its historic leader, Commander Fidel Castro.

Venezuela firmly demands that the Government of the United States put an end to the cruel and punitive embargo against Cuba. The human rights of the Cuban people are being massively, flagrantly and repeatedly violated by that genocidal act. The embargo against Cuba constitutes an act of aggression and hinders the necessary climate of dialogue and cooperation that must prevail among sovereign States in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and in line with its purposes and principles.

Allow me to recall here a quote by Cornelius Tacitus that is a perfect description of the haughtiness of today's imperialists. The great Roman philosopher and historian said: "Where they make a desert, they call it peace". Those who insult and destroy peoples and cultures in the name of freedom operate in the same manner.

This Assembly has rejected the unilateral imposition of measures by the Government of the United States against Cuba. It is high time to reiterate that determination. In this framework, our country subscribes to the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Common Market of the South and its associated States.

Venezuela will vote in favour of draft resolution A/62/L.1 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Mexico once more expresses its rejection of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, and reiterates its opposition to the use of coercive measures that are not supported by the Charter of the United Nations. Mexico states that any type of political, economic or military sanctions imposed upon States can only derive from the decisions or recommendations of the Security Council or General Assembly. The Government of Mexico has maintained that position in the context of various United Nations agencies, supported by the fact that the United States embargo against Cuba is the result of a unilateral policy that has dragged on for almost half a century in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mexico believes, furthermore, that such unilateral measures result in severe humanitarian consequences — in direct contradiction to the objectives that supposedly inspired those measures — and represent a rejection of diplomacy and dialogue as the ideal ways to settle disputes among States.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/92), various organs and entities of the United Nations system have noted the embargo's negative impact on the economic and social development of Cuba. Some of those consequences include the effect on foreign banks' transactions with Cuba in United States dollars and on Cuban assets worldwide; retaliatory measures taken against foreign companies' investment operations in Cuba, limiting the options for attracting foreign investment to those companies that have no commercial interests in the United States; obstacles to the integration of Cuba into the global trading system, with consequent negative effects on gross domestic product growth, on export income and on industrial and agricultural production; limitations on Cuban access to development loans granted by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank; difficulties in obtaining the necessary resources and supplies for cooperative education and health programmes in Cuba as well as external financing for agricultural and rural development programmes; and, more generally, effects that have repercussions for third countries because they cannot interact economically, academically and socially with Cuba.

The Government of Mexico maintains its bilateral and multilateral relations on the basis of the general principles of international law that govern peaceful and civilized coexistence among sovereign States. Such principles have been upheld with consistency and perseverance over time in the relationship between Mexico and Cuba.

Thus, since 1992, when the Government of the Republic of Cuba first submitted to the Assembly a draft resolution on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America, Mexico has voted in favour of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on this subject. My Government has demonstrated to the international community its firm opposition to the extraterritorial application of national laws in other countries in violation of international law. For 16 years, Mexico has stated that the embargo must end and has supported the inclusion of Cuba in all regional integration mechanisms in order to foster economic and commercial exchange and cooperation for development.

Mexico believes that the observance of international law and the norms and principles that govern coexistence among nations, and respectful dialogue, irrespective of differences and inequalities, are necessary instruments for overcoming differences between States and guaranteeing international peace. Societies evolve and change in line with their own circumstances, and not as a result of externally imposed mechanisms.

For the aforementioned reasons, Mexico will support the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) that has been submitted at this session on this subject.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/92) on the implementation of resolution 61/11, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". The Vietnamese delegation fully associates itself with the statements by the representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China on this important agenda item.

My delegation welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, at our deliberations today.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba for almost half a century has caused huge economic damage and untold suffering for the Cuban people. It has severely hindered their economic and social development and undermined their endeavours to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Direct economic damages caused by the embargo to the Cuban people exceed $89 billion over almost 50 years; last year's damages to Cuba's foreign trade alone amounted to over $1.4 billion.

My delegation expresses its serious concern regarding the fact that this long-standing embargo has not only remained intact, but has also been tightened, with the enforcement of laws and provisions of a distinctly extraterritorial character. Viet Nam holds that this embargo, the longest in history, runs counter to the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the regulations of the World Trade Organization. The prolongation of such coercive economic measures will only cause further tension in the bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba and more hardship and difficulties for the Cuban people, especially those most vulnerable, such as women and children.

It is thus a surprise to no one that the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has been repeatedly rejected by a growing number of Member States, to the point where the opposition has become almost unanimous. Today, the presence of such a large number of Member States and their active participation in these deliberations are strong evidence of their opposition to these unilateral extraterritorial measures.

Every nation has the inalienable right to determine its own political system and the path of development suitable to its specific conditions. Viet Nam is convinced that the differences between the United States and Cuba should be settled through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of mutual respect, respect for each other's independence and sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We believe that the normalization and development of friendly relations between the two geographically close neighbours will serve the interests of their peoples and those of regional and international peace and security. In that spirit, my delegation calls upon the United States of America to put an immediate end to its policy of economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reaffirm our country's sentiments of friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people. The Vietnamese Government and people will continue to do our utmost to assist the Government and the peace-loving people of Cuba in overcoming the effects of the embargo.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Peréz Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba — and against the rights of the peoples represented in this Assembly — has already lasted for nearly half a century.

According to conservative estimates, it has caused losses to Cuba of more than $89 billion. At the United States dollar's current value, that accounts to no less than $222 billion. Everyone can understand the level of socio-economic development that Cuba would have attained had it not been subjected to this unrelenting and obsessive economic war. The embargo is today the main obstacle to the development and well-being of the Cubans and a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the rights of our people.

The embargo attempts to subdue the Cuban people through starvation and disease. That is how the essence of the embargo on Cuba was explained at a meeting led by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1960 — the following is a quote from the document before that meeting, which was subsequently declassified in the 1990s:

> "There is no effective political opposition in Cuba .... The only predictable measure we have today to alienate internal support for the revolution is through disillusionment and desperation, based on dissatisfaction and economic duress. Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba. Money and supplies must be denied to Cuba in order to decrease real wages, bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of government."

Forty-seven years later, President George W. Bush repeated it in these words: "I also urge our Congress to show our support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo".

Seven in every ten Cubans have only ever known the perennial threat of aggression against our homeland and the economic hardships caused by the relentless persecution of the embargo.

The United States has ignored, with arrogance and political blindness, the 15 resolutions adopted by the General Assembly calling for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. What is more, over the past year, they have adopted new measures bordering on madness and fanaticism, which further tighten the sanctions and the extraterritorial persecution of our relations with the countries represented in this Assembly.

The embargo had never been enforced with such viciousness as over the past year. On 14 August 2006, the Government of the United States went as far as to penalizing the Alliance of Baptists, claiming that some of its faithful engaged in tourism during a visit to Cuba for religious purposes. In December 2006, the Government of the United States prevented American companies from providing Internet services to Cuba. As a result, in Cuba, if one tries to access Google Earth, as do millions of users around the world every day, one gets the following response: "This service is not available in your country."

Cuban children have been particularly harmed by the embargo that President Bush has promised to strengthen. Cuban children do not have the use of Sevorane, an inhaled anaesthetic manufactured by the North American company Abbott, and the best paediatric general anaesthesia. We must use lower-quality substitutes. President Bush will undoubtedly explain that by saying that those Cuban children are collateral victims of his war against Cuba.

Cuban children suffering from arrhythmia can no longer receive the pacemakers that the American company Saint Jude Medical once sold us. Saint Jude Medical was forced to stop doing business with Cuba due to the extreme pressure exerted by the Office for Foreign Assets Control. The United States delegation should explain to the Assembly why Cuban children suffering from cardiac arrhythmia are enemies of the United States Government. The Cuban delegation cannot explain it. Perhaps the United States delegation could, as culture has been one of the main targets in prosecuting the blockade.

The Government of the United States prevents Cuba from participating in the Puerto Rico International Book Fair. Blocking the participation of Cuban writers and publishers in a book fair is a barbaric act.

Beginning in December 2006, hotels belonging to the American chains Ritz-Carlton, Hilton and Marriott received instructions from the United States Government to cancel contracts with Cuban musicians working temporarily in their hotels throughout the world. Only if they move to Miami, declare their admiration for President Bush's policies and regret ever having lived in Cuba will they be able to be hired again.

Today, I would like to reiterate our solidarity with American filmmakers Oliver Stone and Michael Moore. Mr. Stone has been fined by the United States Government, in the name of freedom, for travelling to Cuba to shoot the documentaries *Comandante* and *Looking for Fidel*. I really do not know how President Bush thought that Oliver Stone could find Fidel unless he travelled to Cuba. Michael Moore is being investigated for the trip that he made to our country last March to shoot his documentary *Sicko*. This is twenty-first century McCarthyism.

With that grotesque persecution of the honest word and independent art, the President of the United States is emulating the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. The difference is that this modern-day Inquisition is much more barbaric and lethal. For it organized the looting of the fabulous Baghdad Library and the burning of over 1 million volumes.

I should now like to recall the words expressed by international Cuban artist Alicia Alonso in a recent letter to American intellectuals and artists:

> "Let us work together so that Cuban artists and writers can take their talent to the United States, and for you not to be prevented from coming to our island to share your knowledge and values — for a song, a book, a scientific study or a performance not to be irrationally considered a crime".

The blockade persecutes human exchanges and relations between the peoples of Cuba and the United States. It also prevents normal relations between Cuban families on both sides of the Florida Strait. Fines of up to $1 million for companies and $250,000 for individuals, as well as prison sentences of up to 10 years for offenders, is the price to be risked by an American visiting our country as a tourist or by a Cuban residing in the United States who wants to visit a sick relative in Cuba.

On more than one occasion, the Assembly has heard the representatives of the United States say that the issue that we are now debating is a bilateral matter that should not be dealt with by this forum. They will likely repeat that fallacious argument later when they explain their vote. However, as members of the Assembly are well aware, the brutal economic war imposed on Cuba affects not only Cubans. If that alone were the case, it would be an extremely serious situation. But it is even worse: it is an affront to international law, the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and the right of every country to engage in free and sovereign trade with whomever it chooses.

The extraterritorial enforcement of American laws, in disregard of the legitimate interests of third countries — the same countries represented by those present in the Hall — to invest and develop normal economic and trade relations with Cuba is an issue that concerns all States gathered here. In the period spanning May 2006 to May 2007 alone, at least 30 countries were affected by the extraterritorial provisions of the blockade policy against Cuba. Let us look at just a few examples.

On 28 July 2006, the Netherlands Caribbean Bank of the Netherlands Antilles experienced the enforcement of blockade regulations. That included the freezing of accounts from this bank held in the United States and a prohibition from carrying out any transactions involving American citizens or entities.

On 4 May 2007, the British company PSL Energy Services was fined $164,000 for exporting oil industry equipment and services to Cuba.

Sabroe compressors could also not be exported to Cuba, once the Danish company that manufactures them was acquired by an American corporation.

The United States multinational General Electric took over the Finnish company Datex-Ohmeda. Up until the day of the takeover Cuba was able to continue to purchase its excellent Finnish-made anaesthesia and multipurpose monitoring equipment as usual.

When Cuba's Institute for Food Nutrition and Hygiene tried to buy an infrared spectrophotometer from the Japanese company Shimadzu, it discovered that it was forbidden to do so under the blockade because more than 10 per cent of its components were of American origin.

The German company BASF AG could not sell a herbicide to Cuba, neither from Germany nor from its subsidiaries in Latin America, because the active ingredient it contains is of American origin.

Since late 2006, when the Spanish cruise ship company Pullmantur was acquired by the American company Royal Caribbean, the cruise ship *Holiday Dream*, which is owned by Pullmantur, has had to suspend its operations in Cuba.

In December 2006, the management of Norway's Scandic Hotel, which had been bought in March 2006 by the American hotel chain Hilton, cancelled the reservations of a Cuban delegation that was to attend an international tourism trade show. That caused great scandal and was widely rejected by Norwegian public opinion. However, the most incredible thing was yet to happen. Hilton Group's spokeswoman in London made a public announcement — and I urge representatives to listen clearly — that the chain would bar bookings by Cubans in all its hotels around the world, because otherwise it would be subject to fines, or even prison sentences, under the laws of the blockade.

However, undoubtedly the most notorious episode to take place this year vis-à-vis the United States blockade against Cuba was the pitched battle waged by the United States Treasury Department against Cuba's relations with third-country financial and banking institutions. That was especially possible after the United States Government and its special services gained access to the confidential information held by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). It is through that body that nearly all payments and message exchanges are transacted by financial institutions around the world.

In the past year, more than 20 banks from various countries have been grossly threatened in order to disrupt any kind of relations or transactions with Cuba. For understandable reasons, I cannot give the Assembly more information on such a sensitive issue, as that would facilitate the obsessive persecution on the part of American agencies that are entirely devoted to this ignoble task.

Just a few days ago, the President of the United States said that the Cuban regime uses the United States embargo as a scapegoat for all of Cuba's miseries. However, based on information provided by 118 countries and 21 international organizations, the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/62/92 clearly and thoroughly confirms the actions undertaken by the United States Administration in the course of the past year to strengthen the blockade and intensify its serious consequences for Cuba.

The General Assembly has an opportunity today to freely and openly voice the opinion of the international community on the policy of blockade and aggression that the United States has imposed on Cubans for nearly 50 years. At this very moment, back in Cuba our people are following with both attention and hope the decision that members of the Assembly will take. They do so recalling the words of Fidel: "Never had a nation such sacred things to defend nor such profound convictions for which to fight".

Cuba will not surrender. It fights and will continue to fight, with the conviction that defending our rights today is tantamount to defending the rights of all the peoples represented in the Assembly. On behalf of Cuba, I ask representatives to vote in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". I ask the Assembly to do so in defiance of the lies and threats made in recent days. We ask that you vote in favour of Cuba's draft resolution, as a vote in favour is also a vote in favour of all the peoples of the world.

I shall conclude by recalling the words by José Martí, apostle of Cuba's independence: "He who rises with Cuba today will be rising for all time to come". Freedom for the five Cuban heroes, fighters against terrorism and political prisoners, in American jails! Freedom for the five Cuban heroes! I do indeed have a legitimate right to say "Viva Cuba libre! Viva Cuba Libre! Viva Cuba libre!"

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me begin by welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, whose presence at this debate is an indication of the importance we all attach to this issue.

As we have just heard, for more than 47 years the people of Cuba have lived under a unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on them by their neighbour, the United States of America. That means that the majority Cuban citizens have known no other life than a life under coercive measures. But, despite everything, the Cuban people have survived.

That long-standing economic, commercial and financial embargo has been consistently rejected by a growing number of Member States of the United Nations, to a point where their opposition has become almost unanimous. Throughout the embargo, the Cuban people have extended a hand of friendship and solidarity to other peoples around the world. For instance, it is not unusual to find Cuban doctors and nurses in many parts of Latin America and Africa. Cuba's outstanding work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology in many developing countries, and throughout the world in general, is recognized by the international community. The embargo that was designed to stifle the everyday lives of the Cuban people has instead produced a contribution by Cuba to the betterment of the lives of other peoples around the world.

Cuba's contribution has also included supporting struggles for freedom and justice around the world. For example, in South Africa we recognized Cuba's contribution to our own freedom and democracy. The Wall of Remembrance of our heroes of the struggle against apartheid lists a number of Cuban fighters who fought alongside our freedom fighters, and even gave their lives to see South Africa free. Today, we remember and honour those heroes, who succeeded in spite of the embargo aimed at their everyday lives.

South Africa has consistently opposed all aspects of the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, for more fundamental reasons that go beyond the solidarity we share with the Cuban people. South Africa views the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo as a violation of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. South Africa has therefore repeatedly joined the vast majority of countries in expressing its disagreement with, and opposition to, all aspects of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

We are guided by the basic norms of international law and conduct and our principled support for the need to eliminate coercive economic measures as a means of achieving political and economic goals. South Africa believes that constructive dialogue can foster mutual trust and understanding, as well as engender harmony and peaceful coexistence among nations.

South Africa is committed to working towards a better world for all, including the Cuban people, in which nations coexist peacefully, no matter how large or small. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires adherence by all nations to the rule of law, including international law.

My delegation believes that the presence of such a large number of Member States in this Hall today, and their participation in these deliberations, is an indication of their opposition to unilateral extraterritorial measures. We are here to express our firm opposition to coercive economic measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries, as such measures are contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.

South Africa will join the majority in the Assembly in supporting the draft resolution before us today. We will vote yes because this relentless and unilateral action has caused untold suffering to the people of Cuba. We believe that the overwhelming majority of Member States present today will join us in voting yes in support of the Cuban people.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For 15 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions urging all countries, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, to repeal or invalidate all laws and measures with extraterritorial effect that compromise the sovereignty of other States, undermine the legitimate rights and interests of entities and persons under the jurisdiction of those States and affect the freedom of trade and navigation. Regrettably, however, the long-term economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba imposed by its rich neighbour is still in place.

In an age of economic globalization exchanges and cooperation on an equal footing among countries represent the trend of our times. Normal economic, commercial and financial ties among countries are in the interest of all countries, and are by no means a favour given by any one country to others. Dialogue on an equal footing is the best way to resolve any difference. The international community has the right to raise serious concerns over the embargo and sanctions suffered by Cuba over the years, and to request the county concerned to end such embargo and sanctions.

The 40-odd years of embargo and sanctions against Cuba not only harm the interests of Cuba and many other countries, thereby seriously hampering development efforts at the international level, they also go against the principles of democracy, freedom, the rule of law and human rights.

First, the practice of attempting to force another country, through embargo and sanctions, to give up its right to independently choose its own path to development, even to overthrow its Government, constitutes a violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing contemporary international relations. That kind of practice has nothing to do with promoting democracy and freedom.

Secondly, the embargo and sanctions imposed against Cuba are extraterritorial in nature, and are therefore in violation of international law and can by no means promote democracy and freedom in any country. They are opposed by all countries, and run counter to the principle of trade liberalization.

Thirdly, the embargo and sanctions have seriously obstructed and constrained the efforts of the Cuban people to eradicate poverty, improve their living standards, pursue economic and social development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. They undermine the rights of the Cuban people to life and development.

The Chinese Government has always maintained that countries should develop State-to-State relations based on equality and in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and work to promote democracy and the rule of law in international relations. We believe that, in the light of their specific national conditions, countries should choose their own political, economic and social systems and their own mode of development. Differences between States should be resolved through dialogue and cooperation and on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Given the foregoing, the Chinese Government requests an early end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo and sanctions imposed by the country concerned against Cuba. It is our hope that there will be dialogue rather than confrontation, and contacts and exchanges rather than embargo and sanctions. We hope that the relevant resolutions of the United Nations will be implemented without delay. China therefore supports the draft resolution submitted by Cuba under the current agenda item.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, who is with us today, has explained in great detail the exact consequences of the United States blockade against Cuba.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report contained in document A/62/92, which reflects the unanimous objection of Member States to the imposition of the unilateral and extraterritorial economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Russia's position on the draft resolution introduced under this agenda item has not changed. Our country shares the view of the overwhelming majority of Member States, which resolutely condemns the embargo against Cuba and calls for its end. We are convinced that a halt to the embargo and the normalization of United States-Cuba relations in general would help to improve the situation and help further integrate Cuba into regional and global processes.

An appeal adopted on 18 October 2007 by the State Duma of the Russian Federation entitled "To the parliaments of United Nations Member States and international parliamentary organizations", which will also be submitted to the Secretary-General, emphasized the following points.

The continuing economic blockade against the Republic of Cuba is an act of crude pressure by the United States of America against a sovereign State. According to Cuban authorities, two thirds of Cubans were born under the blockade. The economic blockade also hinders the normal functioning of every system necessary for the lives of Cubans — including those relating to the health system, including emergency services for the severely ill, services for pregnant women and children, education, culture, science, transport and utilities. The ongoing blockade undermines Cuba's economy, with the most serious of consequences for the various sectors of the economy. The policy of economic blockade against Cuba infringes upon the rights and legitimate interests of third States.

The continuing commercial, economic and financial blockade of Cuba by the United States is counterproductive and out of step with the spirit of the times in which we live. It is a remnant from the days of the cold war. It prevents the establishment of a new just world order in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The continuation of the blockade is also incompatible with the effort under way to reform the

United Nations, for it ignores the unanimous view of Member States regarding the need to work together to implement the principles underpinning our efforts to abandon confrontation and embrace cooperation based on respect for the rights of nations to choose for themselves their political, economic and social systems.

Guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter with regard to the inadmissibility of any discriminatory measure or interference in the internal affairs of States, Russia will continue its policy to vote in favour of the draft resolution calling for an end to the blockade.

Mr. Salim (India): We align ourselves with the statement made by the Chairperson of the Group of 77.

The nearly five-decades-old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America has been the annual subject of debate by this body since 1991. The embargo has been reinforced by domestic laws of the United States of America, through which the extraterritorial reach of the embargo encompasses foreign companies as well as foreign subsidiaries of United States companies doing business with Cuba or Cuban entities. Such domestic laws include the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

The international community has been categorical in repeatedly expressing its opposition to the extraterritorial aspect of the embargo that has been implemented in accordance with United States domestic laws and regulations. We fully share that call by the international community. The General Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures. Through its resolutions, it has called upon all States to respect their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

The continuation of the embargo against Cuba, in particular through its extraterritorial effects, has hampered that country's ability to pursue its development imperatives. It has also caused hardship to its population in a variety of ways. The impact of the embargo has been particularly severe in the area of medical care, through a reduction in access to medical equipment, medicines and diagnostic aids. Other affected areas include food aid deliveries, the education sector, international trade and investment, transportation and access to financial markets. In addition, the embargo has had an indirect negative extraterritorial impact on Cuba's efforts to provide assistance under South-South cooperation in the field of medicine, in particular to African countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concludes, in the report (A/62/92) of the Secretary-General, that the embargo by the United States of America has led to an adverse impact on gross domestic product growth, export revenues, industrial and agricultural production, trade and social sectors such as food, health, education, communications and science and technology, as well as trade diversion.

Embargoes and economic blockades are against the spirit of unhindered trade and commerce without barriers. The embargo has achieved nothing, except to create hindrances on the path of development for the people of Cuba. The continuation of the policy of sanctions and blockade, against the opinion of the overwhelming portion of the population of the world, is nothing but a desire to continue an age-old unjust arrangement. That is all the more untenable in an era of globalization, when its advocates are loudly proclaiming and working for barrier-free trade and commerce and seamless movements of goods and services around the world.

Given their geographical proximity, the United States of America and Cuba should be natural partners in trade, commerce and investment. We believe that a considerable part of the business sector in the United States of the America would like to benefit from unhindered access to the Cuban market and that many United States citizens would like to establish greater contacts with Cuba through tourism. The export of agricultural and medical products from the United States of America to Cuba, insofar as permitted by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, is testimony to the interest and potential of trade and business contacts between the two countries. Various legislative attempts in the United States of America to relax the embargo also support that view. We therefore look forward to the lifting of the sanctions and the embargo against Cuba.

In conclusion, let me reiterate India's opposition to unilateral measures by countries that impinge upon the sovereignty of another country, including attempts to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations. The international community must work towards establishing a just international economic environment conducive to development for all countries, free from sanctions and embargoes.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Uganda supports the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. To emphasize what I am going to say, let me begin by quoting what our leaders said on the issue of democracy and sovereignty in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.

> "We reaffirm that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We also reaffirm that while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy, that it does not belong to any country or region, and reaffirm the necessity of due respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination." (*resolution 60/1, para. 135*)

We believe the people of Cuba have the right to determine how they are going to be governed and to choose who should govern them and for how long. We therefore view the attempt to impose sanctions on Cuba as an attempt to impose regime change in Cuba. That is not acceptable. The embargo has hurt the people of Cuba and has crippled their economic development. For many years now, through this Assembly, the international community has consistently called for the lifting of the embargo. This almost universal voice should be heeded.

Isolationism does not do anybody or any country any good. Here in the United States, a number of voices have been raised in support of lifting the embargo. Even one of the presidential candidates for next year's elections has said that, once elected, he would lift the embargo against Cuba and establish diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba.

It is high time that the United States authorities concerned heeded those overwhelming voices and lifted the embargo, which has not served any useful purpose and is a relic of the cold war era. It is against the principles of international law and free trade and is contrary to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Bolivia wishes to align itself with the statements made on behalf of the Rio Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

After 47 years of a harmful embargo against Cuba and after 15 General Assembly resolutions calling for an end to the unilateral embargo by the United States, we see the utter failure of that commercial, economic and financial embargo as a mechanism seeking to impose foreign ideologies on a sovereign nation. Historical facts such as the Second World War and the Viet Nam war, to mention just a few, have shown that no brute force is capable of breaking the unshakeable will of sovereign peoples in their struggle for their right to self-determination. On the contrary, such force only serves to unite the people against their aggressors.

The eloquent details submitted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba have very clearly shown the inhuman consequences of the embargo. The United States policy of imposing an embargo against Cuba is certainly a violation of the human rights of the Cuban people and therefore deserves corresponding sanctions.

However, the Assembly cannot take such decisions, because of the very provisions of the Charter. It is precisely for that reason that the resolutions adopted year after year, trying to put an end to the acts of aggression by certain countries, do not have any real implications for those concerned. In reforming the United Nations, we should address the imperative need to empower the General Assembly to take binding decisions on certain subjects, such as in the case of violations of human rights.

The people of Bolivia reiterate its appeal to all the world's peoples to build genuine global peace based on the principles of mutual respect among peoples, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, the quest for solutions to conflicts through rational and sincere dialogue and respect for Mother Nature as the source of all wisdom. It is time to impose reason. It is time to lift the inhuman embargo against the sister country of Cuba.

Mr. Abdellatif (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/92) on the implementation of resolution 61/11, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". My delegation would like to express its support for the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would also like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba at this meeting of the Assembly.

For more than 40 years, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba has impeded the economic and social development of that country and has caused great hardship for the Cuban people. That has occurred even though the General Assembly and many other international forums and Governments have called for an end to the embargo, which has not only been maintained, but has also been intensified through the enforcement of unilateral extraterritorial laws and provisions.

The embargo is in contravention of the basic principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the stipulations of the World Trade Organization. It has been the longest embargo in history. Its continuation will only lead to further tension in bilateral relations and to further difficulties for the Cuban people, particularly the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya once again expresses its strong opposition to unilateral measures imposed by certain States for political reasons. I would like to express our great concern regarding the continued imposition by certain States, of an extraterritorial, coercive and unilateral economic embargo. This runs counter to the principles of international law, particularly the principle of equal sovereignty of States and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. The implementation of this embargo will increase the hardships of and deepen the hatred and anger between peoples with common interests. That makes it critical to abide by the principles of the United Nations Charter and to seek appropriate and civilized solutions to problems, including ways to avoid infringement of such basic human rights as the rights to development, food, medical care and essential social institutions.

The imposition of embargoes and sanctions has never been an appropriate way to solve problems between States. The United Nations Charter identifies appropriate measures for settling any bilateral issue through negotiation, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, investigation and transparent settlement mediated by international and regional organizations and agencies on the basis of equal sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. States have reaffirmed that approach in the resolutions of the General Assembly, which are immediately binding because they embody justice and logic and strengthen the principles of international law. Moreover, they send a clear message that comprehensive peace cannot be achieved, friendly relations between States cannot be established and development goals cannot be met without international cooperation based on mutual respect for the sovereignty of States, regardless of their size, their population and the nature of their economic and political system.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this agenda item.

The General Assembly is deliberating again, for the sixteenth year in a row, the agenda item regarding the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on the Government and people of Cuba by the United States of America. The issue came to the General Assembly after decades of the embargo, which has now stretched for 49 years. That is almost the entire period of the existence of the current Government of the Republic of Cuba.

The United Republic of Tanzania would like to reiterate its sympathy with the people and Government of Cuba and join other Members of the United Nations, whose number has been growing by the year, in calling for the ending of the embargo against the people and the Government of Cuba.

Over the years, it has become evident that the wide-ranging embargo is specifically targeted to inflict maximum suffering on the people of Cuba, ostensibly to undermine their Government. The victims have indeed been people across the board, with most suffering experienced by the most vulnerable — the young, the old and people with disabilities. That is morally reprehensible given that among the highest and most respected values espoused by this Assembly are human life, human dignity and the protection of civilians irrespective of race, colour or citizenship.

It is an understatement to say that the heroic resilience of the Cuban people has made the embargo a futile exercise. It is time to review that strategy, whatever its worth, at a time when international peace and security, harmony and understanding are feverishly sought after by the international community after the end of the cold war and the emergence of new threats and discords in the world.

The embargo was already biting and the people of Cuba were heroically standing firm to weather its consequences when the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts were enacted to tighten the embargo by imposing economic restrictions on third parties doing business with Cuba. Embargoes and blockades are antiquated means of warfare at a time when there are multitudes of strategies, options and methods of resolving differences in the international community through the United Nations and bilateral and regional forums. Even in the face of some of the most threatening challenges to international peace and security, total embargoes, blockades or sanctions against civilians have been replaced by more humane means of dealing with adversaries.

There cannot be a better gauge of the disapproval of those outdated, civilian-targeted measures than the overwhelming support of this Assembly for the lifting of the embargo. We would be adopting double standards if the views and support of this General Assembly on other issues were taken as a yardstick for mobilizing and advancing support or opposition to particular policies — and such views are usually heeded by the concerned parties — but not on the issue of the blockade against Cuba. The United Republic of Tanzania calls for wisdom to prevail by reviewing, progressively easing and eventually lifting the embargo against a people whose only crime is to live on their sovereign soil.

The weather has not been kinder, either. As we speak, the people of Cuba are bracing for the onslaught of yet another tropical storm, with the usual expected devastation. Hurricanes visit that island almost every year and cause untold damage to the economy and social infrastructure of the people. Those natural calamities should be enough to prick the conscience of people and Governments that attach value and respect to human life and the suffering of innocent people.

On the contrary, more pain is added to injury by the cumulative consequences of the embargo, which have been passed on from one Cuban generation to another. We hope that these appeals from this world rostrum will not be made in vain and will be heeded by all people who love peace, their elected representatives, and leaders who are capable of bringing light to the end of this long, dark tunnel of embargoes and blockades against the people of Cuba.

Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia): Please allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly for the able manner in which he is presiding over this session of the General Assembly.

Zambia wishes to align itself fully with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan and Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively.

Zambia has noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/62/92, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We believe that the report has provided us with an objective and clear analysis of the negative impact arising from the sanctions against Cuba. We maintain that the Helms-Burton legislation violates the sovereignty of Cuba and is a breach of international law, in addition to not being inline with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including those of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the freedom of international trade and navigation.

The report of the Secretary-General once again vindicates the position consistently held by the Assembly over the years, namely, that the embargo against Cuba hurts innocent people, in particular the most vulnerable, who are women and children. In addition, Zambia notes that, despite the hardship caused by the embargo for more than four decades, the Cuban people have become more determined and united in defence of their country's sovereignty, welfare and dignity, for which they have sacrificed so dearly.

Zambia has repeatedly called on the United States of America to lift the economic embargo against Cuba.

The embargo has a direct negative impact on the principles of free trade and navigation. We have been and are committed to the strengthening of universal respect for international law in the conduct of all forms of relations among sovereign States.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Based on the information compiled by the Secretary-General in his latest report — and, indeed, in the report of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba — Zambia will once again vote in favour of this draft resolution. My delegation's vote is based on Zambia's firm belief in the sanctity of the Charter of the United Nations, which binds Member States. We reiterate that the embargo has adversely affected the well-being of the Cuban people.

In conclusion, Zambia appeals to all Member States to support the call for the immediate ending of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba — a country that is at once Caribbean, Taino, Latin American, African and internationalist — has for more than 50 years continued to heroically resist the most aggressive imperialist policies in modern history. Cuba's patriotic courage and socialist conviction have been stronger than the millions of dollars wasted on a war of aggression. They have also been stronger than the inhuman and illegal commercial and economic blockade and all the technology invested by the empire to dash the dreams and will of the Cuban people.

Nicaragua, which was also a victim of the same sort of imperialist policies and commercial and economic blockades, which included the mining of its ports, experienced for itself the consequences of such inhuman measures against peoples undergoing development and seeking to recover their sovereignty and defend their natural resources in the face of ferocious imperialist and colonialist plundering.

Thanks to the indomitable will of its people, of Rubén Darío and of Sandino, Nicaragua is today proud to join Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) submitted by Cuba, thereby becoming the 184th assenting vote following 16 years of shameful non-participation in the voting.

Commercial relations in the international community are today affected by the extraterritorial nature of the illegal commercial and economic blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba. All those policies — along with so-called complementary legislation known as the Helms-Burton and Torricelli laws, the Cuban Adjustment Act and the Cuban Transition Act, which is also known as the Bush plan — are intrusive and flagrant violations of international law that are reprehensible in any circumstances.

As we discuss Cuba and the policies aimed against it today, we should remember the five Cuban heroes who continue to be unjustly imprisoned in United States jails. To them and their families, we send out our warmest expression of solidarity.

The cold war is a thing of the past. Various sorts of relations have blossomed in various countries. We ourselves can attest as to how old political, ideological and even military adversaries are developing political and commercial relations in an environment of ever-greater normalcy, in which each actor looks after his own interests without having to turn to blockades, pressure and threats that have an impact upon the sovereignty and trade of third countries.

The inevitable question therefore is, Why is the will of the international community, which demands and end to this political, commercial and economic aberration, being disregarded year after year? Why does the illegal blockade against Cuba continue? Could it be because of Cuba's example of human solidarity? Could it be because the Cuban people, while fighting against a criminal blockade, are sparing no effort to join with their Government to help their brothers and sisters in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Latin America, as well as Caribbean, native, Latin American, African and Asian peoples? Wherever there is humanitarian need, one will find Cuba's doctors, teachers, technicians, academics and internationalists — one will find the gaze of Che. That is how Cuba is, always willing to share what it has achieved through so much sacrifice and patriotism. It is even willing to share with developed countries themselves — which, if they were not sometimes so proud, would accept the humanitarian assistance that Cuba is always willing to provide to any country in the world.

We commend the initiatives of the Cuban Government to achieve unconditional dialogue based on an equal footing in order to help find a political solution to this anachronistic blockade. We regret that the response has always been the same, namely, the imposition of new measures to yet further expand the economic and financial blockade against Cuba. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the fact that a growing number of American business people, religious leaders, academics, scientists, students and elected officials are siding with the international community, which, on the basis of international law, is demanding a definitive end of the blockade against Cuba.

Whatever the empire's reason or justification, the Government of the United States of America should end the commercial and economic blockade. Any problems with real or potential effects on relations between countries should be resolved in a civilized manner through dialogue and peaceful negotiation and on the basis of mutual respect for the legal sovereignty and equality of States.

Latin America and the Caribbean, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China have categorically supported Cuba. Nicaragua, which has always maintained its solidarity, reiterates its unconditional support for the heroic people and Government of Cuba in their titanic battle against the constant aggression of the empire and for the return of Guantánamo, as well as in its efforts to protect its achievements, sovereignty, self-determination and socialist homeland.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Zimbabwe would like to reiterate its firm commitment and adherence to the fundamental principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the freedom of international trade and navigation. Zimbabwe has consistently advocated for the revocation of laws and measures with extra territorial application that have been applied and are being applied unilaterally against Member States.

It is a matter of public record that, for over four decades, all the debates at the United Nations have objected to the application of unilateral economic measures in order to achieve certain political objectives. Numerous appeals from the majority of Member States and resolutions of the General Assembly have failed to convince successive United States Administrations to end the unilateral measures imposed on the people and Government of Cuba. That extension of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States to all countries is contrary to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, which are recognized under international law and as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. That policy of the United States not only undermines the Cuban people's right to development but also contradicts the freedom of trade and navigation and contravenes the provisions of the World Trade Organization, of which the United States is a member.

As if that were not enough, the Cuban people, like their Zimbabwean counterparts, have been and continue to be bombarded by propaganda broadcasts by radio stations set up and financed by the Administration in Washington. The ultimate aim of those illegal broadcasts is to incite some sections of the populations to effect regime change in both targeted countries. The doctrine of regime change contradicts the letter and spirit of the principle of sovereignty, which allows people to freely choose the socio-economic and political dispensation of their liking. There is no justification whatsoever for the continuation of those cruel, illegitimate and immoral United States hostile policies against the Cuban Government and its people.

As a current victim of domestic laws and legislation with extraterritorial impact, Zimbabwe fully understands the need to end the unilateral and illegal economic embargo on Cuba. Zimbabwe therefore firmly stands by the heroic people of Cuba in their fight against that illegal embargo.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Before giving the floor to the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the vote, may I kindly remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Goddard (United States of America): As in years past, the United States wishes to point out the fundamental fact that the exercise of the sovereign right to decide whether and to what extent to trade with another Government is a bilateral issue and, as such, should not come before the General Assembly. We note that many other States or regional groups have, from time to time, determined to restrict transactions with others for a variety of reasons. They should consider whether this draft resolution sets a precedent that they would find acceptable in other contexts.

Cuba's problems derive not from any decision of the United States, but from the embargo on freedom that the Cuban regime has imposed on its own people. The Cuban Government denies its people information, access to the outside world, the right to travel and opportunities to better their lives economically. We maintain our policy of directing aid and trade into the hands of the Cuban people to break the absolute control that the Cuban regime holds over the resources that its people need.

According to the Cuban Government's own trade statistics, the United States has exported nearly $2 billion in agricultural, medical and humanitarian goods to Cuba since 2002. We are one of Cuba's largest suppliers of food and one of Cuba's largest trading partners. In 2006 alone, we authorized the provision of over $270 million in food and medicines by private citizens and organizations, making the American people the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world.

Now more than ever, we invite the Member States considering this draft resolution to reject the arguments of the Cuban Government and focus on effecting a transition in Cuba that would restore its people's fundamental rights. We also encourage Member States and non-governmental organizations to promote free and unfettered access to the Internet in Cuba by all Cubans, to support independent libraries and journalists and to broaden educational opportunities for all Cuban young people, not just a privileged few.

Finally, we call on the international community to join together in demanding that the Cuban Government unconditionally release all political prisoners as the essential step in beginning a process that restores to the Cuban people their basic human rights.

It is long past time that the Cuban people enjoyed the blessings of economic and political freedom. Instead of voting in favour of this draft resolution condemning the United States for declining to engage in unrestricted financial transactions with a regime that deprives its own people of the fundamental human rights that this body is charged with protecting, we urge Member States to oppose the draft resolution and to condemn the Cuban Government's internal embargo on freedom, which is the real cause of the suffering of the Cuban people.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.1. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Micronesia (Federated States of).

Draft resolution A/62/L.1 was adopted by 184 votes to 4, with 1 abstention (resolution 62/3).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I kindly remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. De Lemos Godinho (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this explanation of vote.

The European Union believes that the trade policy of the United States towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. That notwithstanding, the European Union and its member States have clearly expressed their opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the United States embargo as contained in the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

The European Union cannot accept that unilateral measures imposed by the United States on specific countries limit the Union's economic and commercial relations with third countries, in this case Cuba. Therefore, in November 1996, the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons resident in the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton legislation that prohibits compliance with that legislation.

Moreover, on 18 May 1998, at the European Union-United States Summit in London, a package was agreed covering waivers to titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Administration to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind and an understanding with respect to disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection. The European Union continues to urge the United States to implement its side of the 18 May 1998 understanding.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba is clear and was set out in a common position in 1996. The objective of the EU in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a peaceful process of transition, led by the Cuban people, to a pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, sustainable economic recovery and an improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. The European Union underlines its willingness to pursue a comprehensive and open dialogue with both the Cuban Government and Cuban civil society on all topics of mutual interest, including in the political, human rights, economic, scientific and cultural fields. The European Union reiterates its invitation for dialogue and welcomes the fact that preliminary talks took place in New York on the occasion of this year's session of the General Assembly.

The EU deplores the fact that the human rights situation in Cuba has not fundamentally changed, despite a decrease in the number of political prisoners and acts of harassment. The Cuban Government continues to deny its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms. The EU once again urges the Cuban Government to release unconditionally all political prisoners, which is a key priority in its policy towards Cuba. In particular, the EU expresses its utmost concern at the deteriorating health of several political prisoners who are members of the group of 75 political prisoners detained since March 2003. The EU calls on the Cuban authorities to release them immediately. The EU also reiterates its call on the Cuban Government to grant freedom of expression and free access to information.

The Cuban Government's achievements in health care and education are undermined by its restrictions on civil, political and economic rights. Domestic Cuban economic policy — as well as the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States — seriously hampers the economic development of Cuba, negatively affecting the standards of living of the Cuban people.

With regard to the United States of America, we express our rejection of all unilateral measures against Cuba, which are contrary to commonly accepted rules of international trade. We reiterate our view that the lifting of the United States trade embargo would open Cuba's economy, to the benefit of the Cuban people.

With regard to Cuba, the European Union urges the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all the areas I have mentioned.

For all the reasons to which I have referred, and in spite of serious criticism on Cuba's human rights record, the European Union has unanimously voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Venezuela and Uruguay — as well as the associated States of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

As in previous years, the member countries of MERCOSUR and associated States have voted in favour of the draft resolution just adopted. We did so because it is consistent with the group's traditional position. Our vote is also in line with our position in favour of multilateralism and in rejection of the application of unilateral coercive measures that violate free trade and transparent international trade — and are therefore against the well-being of peoples and impede regional integration processes.

The embargo against Cuba contravenes principles of international law, in particular the norms governing international trade and those linking the members of the World Trade Organization. The embargo has been condemned by the General Assembly and other forums and international organizations, including the Organization of American States, the Latin American Economic System, the Ibero-American summit and the summit-level meetings of the Rio Group.

The countries of MERCOSUR and its associated States once again reject the promulgation and application of this sort of unilateral coercive measures with extraterritorial reach, whose validity we do not accept. We therefore reiterate our support for multilateralism as the peaceful and just way to resolve disputes between States in a way that promotes understanding, security, human rights and cooperation.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The economic and financial blockade against Cuba has been in place for almost half a century. It undermines the international principles of the equality of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as that of the freedom of international trade and navigation. The overwhelming majority of Member States believe the embargo against Cuba to be neither a civilized nor a constructive way to address international disputes.

The negative consequences of the application of the extraterritorial policy of embargo pose the main obstacles to the speedy implementation of the projects and programmes for the economic and social development of Cuba that are being implemented today. The blockade is causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to Cuba's economy and social situation. The future and health of the population are at stake.

Every country has the right to choose its own model for development. We believe it is impermissible for any individual country to attempt to force its will upon others through the use of military, economic or other means.

We continue to admire the courage of the Cuban nation, which continues to be an exemplary defender of the dignity and sovereignty of the Cuban people. Belarus is proud to take this opportunity to join its voice with others demanding an end to the embargo against the Cuban people.

Mr. Khoe (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to reiterate our view that the policy of unilateral boycott by the United States against Cuba must be condemned. The international community has repeatedly condemned such hostile policies. There is today growing rejection in the international community of such unilateral policies adopted by Washington, as exemplified by the unjust financial, trade and economic blockade against Cuba — especially given everything that country has suffered, in particular by its women and children.

The United States that always preaches to the world about human rights, is violating such human rights by imposing an embargo against Cuba. The United States boycott and embargo are a crime against humanity. They violate the Charter of the United Nations in the most flagrant way and also violate international law and trade laws. The Charter clearly states that pressures on Member States because of their national choices and their political, economic and social systems are rejected and undemocratic and warrant condemnation and denunciation.

The Sudan has suffered a great deal from Washington's unilateral policies. We therefore voted in support of the draft resolution. Such a vote is a vote against unilateralism, hegemony and against any one country's imposition of its policies and dictates against another through interference in their internal affairs.

My country would like to express its support for the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan and Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We would like to reiterate our solidarity with the people and Government of Cuba. We demand that the unjust blockade and embargo be lifted immediately.

Mr. Lynn (Myanmar): My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/62/92).

For 15 years, the international community has continuously expressed its unequivocal support for the call to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States against Cuba. The Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Havana in September 2006, also reiterated its call upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The promulgation and application by Member States of laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation, violates both the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations and the universally accepted principles of international law. Strictly adhering to that principle, Myanmar opposes all forms of economic and financial sanctions and embargoes that are contrary to international law. As one of the initiators of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Myanmar scrupulously respects the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba has adversely affected the Cuban people and Cuban nationals living in other countries.

The embargo has also negatively impacted third parties. The blockade imposed on the health sector in particular causes undue suffering and hardship to the Cuban people. That act is inhumane and we therefore strongly oppose such measures. Those measures can in no way promote peace and stability in the region. For that reason, Myanmar wholeheartedly associates itself with the call by the international community on the United States to bring an end to the embargo and sanctions against Cuba.

My delegation, in reaffirming our opposition to laws and regulations that have extraterritorial effects and as a manifestation of our friendship towards the Government and people of Cuba, therefore voted in favour of resolution 62/3.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia has consistently expressed its opposition as a matter of principle to the promulgation and application by Member States of extraterritorial laws and measures where such laws and measures affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and navigation.

Such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law and comity. Australia is therefore concerned about the extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton act of 1996 and, for that reason, has again voted for the resolution submitted under the agenda item.

Our vote should not be interpreted as in any way endorsing the internal policies of Cuba. Holding political prisoners and failing to comply with international human rights standards is not an internal matter; it should be of concern to all of us. We should take every opportunity to remind Cuba of its international obligations and urge its full cooperation with international human rights treaties, bodies and mechanisms. In particular, we should urge the Cuban Government to meet its responsibilities to respect the rights of all its population.

The Cuban Minister today claimed that the blockade is the main obstacle to the rights of the Cuban people. He will, with respect, have greater credibility in pursuing that argument when he can show that the internal rights of all Cuban people are properly respected and protected by his own Government.

Mr. Tharyat (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Indonesia voted in favour of resolution 62/3, as we believe that the actions highlighted therein not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. Those sentiments were echoed during the thirty-first annual ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China, held in New York on 27 September, where ministers once again firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries.

The application of an economic and trade embargo will only produce negative effects on the economic and social lives of innocent people, especially women and children. Those measures also constitute a major impediment to the full enjoyment of the right to development by a sovereign State and its people. Such a policy is also not in line with the spirit of global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Indonesia therefore urges an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and calls on all countries to adhere to the principles of equality, mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and respect for human rights.

Mr. Rezvanian (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 62/3, just adopted by the General Assembly, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. While endorsing the statements made by the representatives of Egypt and Pakistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively, I would like to make the following remarks in explanation of our vote on the said resolution.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba runs counter to the principles of international law governing relations among States and contradicts the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for promoting solidarity, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. Such measures have adverse impacts on the living conditions and human rights of the Cuban people and will hamper the efforts of the Cuban Government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the Goals of eradicating poverty and promoting health and education, which are indispensable means of economic and social development.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation calls upon States to "refrain from... any unilateral measure... that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children" (*A/CONF.199/20, annex, para. 102*). The same paragraph further indicates that such unilateral measures hinder the well-being of the affected people and create "obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being and their right to food, medical care and the necessary social services".

Paragraph 101 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation stipulates that "States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries". It adds that trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination in international trade.

The adoption of the said resolution is indicative of the strong objection of the international community to unilateral economic coercive measures in general and the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba in particular.

The Islamic Republic of Iran shares fully the concern of the international community on the imposition of unilateral measures with extraterritorial applications. In that regard, it sympathizes with the Cuban Government and people and therefore emphasizes the urgent need to put an end to such measures and for the full implementation of the resolution that the General Assembly adopted today.

Mr. Khammanichanh (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Over the past four decades, the innocent people of Cuba have continued to endure the miseries resulting from the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America upon their country.

It is disappointing to witness such lingering unilateral and discriminatory commercial practices in today's world of interdependence and multilateral cooperation among States. Moreover, the implementation of extraterritorial or unilateral coercive measures is a direct violation of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as of the freedom of trade and navigation.

In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, a Member State must neither promulgate nor enforce any law, regulation or measure whose extraterritorial effects jeopardize the sovereignty of another Member State, since every nation has the sovereign right to participate freely in the international financial and commercial systems.

On the basis of the universal principle of sovereign equality under the United Nations Charter and international law, no nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another, despite any differences in their socio-political systems. As a sovereign and independent nation, the Republic of Cuba has the right to choose its own political system and the path of development that best suits its specific conditions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the majority of United Nations Member States in reaffirming the urgent need to put an end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba. That long-standing blockade has already caused the Cuban people immeasurable material losses and economic damage. As Members of the United Nations, we should do everything we can to help Cuba to fully reclaim its legitimate right to integrate into the globalized economy. In that spirit, our delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to express my country's support for the statements made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations affirm every country's right to exercise its sovereignty on its own territory and to non-interference in its internal affairs. Thousands of resolutions adopted by the United Nations since its founding in 1945 have reaffirmed the sanctity of those principles and purposes.

The Organization's host country, the United States of America, after having itself bitterly suffered from others' interference in its internal affairs and infringement of its sovereignty before and during the Second World War, played an active and essential role in the formulation of the Charter's text. That fact would make one expect the United States to respect the Charter, which serves as the Organization's constitution and its first and last point of reference. However, because the unilateral embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and the new measures taken to reinforce it are completely inconsistent with the Charter and international law — which are based on the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in others' internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation — those measures are illegal and are completely incompatible with the norms of international relations and constitute an unprecedented challenge to international law.

Cuba has suffered from the blockade for more than 47 years. That is a precedent that we decisively reject, together with any other kind of unilaterally imposed extraterritorial and extrajudicial action by one State against another. The Cuban people, particularly children and the elderly, have suffered economically, socially and politically from the embargo, which is having a pernicious effect on their efforts to achieve prosperity and well-being.

My delegation expresses its appreciation of the fact that Cuba continues to attempt to engage in constructive dialogue with the United States to settle all these controversial issues on the basis of the principles of equal sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference in other States' internal affairs and respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the principle of good-neighbourliness. My delegation believes that the two countries should have normal relations that would serve the interests of their peoples. In that connection, we should like to reaffirm the right of all peoples to choose their own economic, political, social and cultural systems of their own free will and in conformity with the norms of international law.

The fact that 183 States supported this resolution last year and 184 this year shows that a resounding majority of States want an end to the embargo against Cuba and reaffirm the need to respect the national systems chosen by each country in perfect freedom and in accordance with its own national interests.

The international community has reiterated several times its rejection of all unilateral sanctions imposed against Cuba, including the so-called Helms-Burton Act, promulgated by the Government of the United States. That law exceeds the national jurisdiction of the United States and affects the sovereignty of other States that have relations with Cuba, which is incompatible with the principle of the sovereign equality of States and of international law. Furthermore, Syria condemns the most recent measures against Cuba, announced by the United States of America a few days ago in an attempt to destroy the political, economic and social system chosen by the Cuban people.

Despite the constant appeals of the General Assembly for 16 consecutive years, the Government of the United States of America has yet to take any measures to comply with those requests by the international community. It wilfully and obstinately continues to pursue its wrongful policy, ignoring the international community's legitimate demands. My country hopes that all embargoes and similar measures imposed by the United States against many countries, including Cuba and my country will be lifted. We hope that not only the voice of the international community through the General Assembly, but also those of all other international organizations and agencies will be totally heeded and respected by the United States of America and by its legislative bodies. On the basis of this, Syria voted in favour of the draft resolution.

It was surprising and significant to see that Israel voted against the draft resolution. The draft resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority of votes, and the negative vote by Israel shows in addition that Israel does not view international law as anything of value. The entity concerned is an isolated minority in the international community. Things worsened for Israel when it voted against this draft resolution related to the actions of the United States of America.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

Two representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Allow me to remind all members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States today reiterated the traditional lies fabricated to support, strengthen and universalize the failed and illegal policy of hostility, genocidal embargo and aggression by the empire against Cuba.

The representative of the regime fraudulently installed in Washington, confirmed the frustration, despair and personal hatred that the dubious tenant of the White House, George W. Bush, feels for the Cuban people. In its attempt to overthrow the revolution and impose its imperialist designs on Cuba, the United States Government encourages violence and invokes the use of force against the Cuban nation.

On 24 October, the unpopular and bellicose Mr. Bush announced an unprecedented escalation of the policy of the Government of the United States against Cuba. He announced more embargos against the Cuban people, more subjection and more and renewed efforts to subdue, through hunger and disease, the unshakeable sovereign will arising from the resistance of thousands of men, women and children.

Never before has the essence of Bush's policy towards our country — that is, reconquering Cuba by force — been so clear. The chicken hawks in Washington are mistaken if they think they can intimidate us. Millions of Cuban women and men will continue to defend, at the price of our own lives, the sacred victories of the Cuban revolution: freedom, dignity, social justice and the sovereignty we fully enjoy.

If, in the escalation of their current economic, political and diplomatic war against Cuba, they make the mistake of launching themselves into a direct military aggression, we can assure them that they must be prepared to confront, in our country, a resistance that will only end when the independence and sovereignty of our people are assured. We are prepared to defend our homeland and socialism. We believe in the truth and justice that are the basis for the vitality of the Cuban revolution. We wish to thank the world for its valuable solidarity with and support to Cuba.

We understand perfectly well the illegal and incorrect interpretation that Mr. Bush and the people in his regime apply to the concepts of freedom and human rights. Only a criminal dictatorship with demented hegemonic pretensions such as that of Bush could bomb innocent civilian populations in the name of freedom and kidnap, imprison and torture defenceless people in the name of human rights and the so-called war against terror.

The Government of the United States is alone in its policy towards Cuba. Today, the almost universal rejection of the genocidal embargo against the people of Cuba has been confirmed. The United States must respect the right of Cubans to their independence and sovereignty. It must immediately cease its policy of aggression and threats against Cuba. It must renounce the failed idea of fabricating a mercenary opposition in Cuba and stop the radio and television war against our country. It must immediately and unconditionally lift the genocidal embargo. It must abandon its policy of encouraging illegal immigration from Cuba. It must release the five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters who are political prisoners in United States prisons and put an end to the impunity that allows Luis Posada Carriles and dozens of other anti-Cuban agents to operate freely in the United States.

If the United States truly were interested in human rights, it would not have established torture chambers in the illegal base at Guantanamo and would have put an end to the bombing of innocent civilians in Iraq.

Those who are accomplices in the anti-Cuban policy of the Bush regime deserve little credit. A Government like that of Australia has no moral authority by which to criticize Cuba. As for the European Union, I must once again note with regret its hypocrisy, bankrupt self-analysis and lack of ability to define an independent policy towards Cuba. The European Union's supposed concern for human rights has no credibility when its members and associated States are encouraging and systematizing racism and xenophobia, discriminating against immigrants, facilitating the illegal and secretive transfer of persons who were kidnapped or arbitrarily detained by the Central Intelligence Agency or Pentagon of the United States and providing secret facilities for the illegal detention and torture of presumed terrorists. What respect can be given to Governments who are hypocritically opposed to an impartial investigation by the former Commission on Human Rights into the atrocities perpetrated in the torture chambers at Guantanamo?

Cuba will not be intimidated, and our unity cannot be broken. Our people only unite further when faced with imperial threats and arrogance. Such acts have not been able to subjugate our people. As our Head of State, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro, has said, they will never have Cuba. If necessary, we are ready to confront the imperialist aggressors in the trenches, side-by-side with millions of Cubans.

Mr. Goddard (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor again, but my delegation is obliged to exercise our right of reply.

The resolution inaccurately blames the United States for the hardships of the Cuban people, while exonerating the Cuban Government's own policies, which deny the rights of the Cuban people to a fair wage for their labour, to own a business or to otherwise exercise their rights in the marketplace.

The resolution also inaccurately claims that the United States embargo is a violation of freedom of navigation, that is, a blockade. In fact, the United States policy of limiting bilateral transactions with the Cuban regime does not prevent the rest of the world from trading with Cuba or providing Cuba with access to food or medicine.

Most seriously, the resolution does not refer to the embargo on freedom that the Cuban regime has imposed on its own people, which even prevents United Nations and other international human rights organizations from travelling to Cuba and meeting freely with the Cuban people.

The Acting President: I now give the floor once again to the representative of Cuba to exercise the right of reply for the second time.

Mr. Amorós Núñez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, we note that the arguments of the United States are baseless. Obviously, they have not taken into account what happened here today, when 184 countries clearly expressed their opposition to the blockade policy, not for the reasons stated by the United States, but simply because it is an act which is totally contrary to the provisions of the Charter of United Nations and international law.

We do not accept in any way the reasoning given by the United States. We insist that the blockade is the greatest violation of human rights of the Cuban people and that it is the factor preventing us from making further progress in the economic and social development of our people. We therefore do not recognize what has just been said here.

Everything that the delegate of the United States has said is further proof of that country's mendacious policy, which is not endorsed by the international community and is clearly rejected by the United Nations. Nothing is true in what he has stated. We are not going to pursue this any further, we simply wish to indicate that Cuba does not recognize what has been said here. In addition, the vote that took place today is a clear reflection of the international community's opposition to this policy, which, more than anything else, more than just constituting a violation of the human rights of the Cuban people, is a clear indication of the genocidal policy against our people. I am not going to pursue this any further. Once again, we believe that what he has said here is not worthy of any recognition, has no authority and has no chance of being accepted by those present here, particularly by the delegation of Cuba.

The Acting President: Since there are no further representatives who wish to take the floor, may I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 21?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.